United Nations S PV.6086

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6086th meeting

Thursday, 26 February 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Takasu	(Japan)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Nkayivu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Quarrey
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Timor-Leste

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (S/2009/72)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-24985 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Timor-Leste

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (S/2009/72)

The President: Pursuant to the decision taken at the 6085th meeting of the Security Council, I invite the representative of Timor-Leste to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

I should also like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now continue its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/111, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Australia, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Portugal, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Members of the Council also have before them document S/2009/72, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Japan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mexico, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1867 (2009).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6087

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6087th meeting

Thursday, 26 February 2009, 10.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Takasu	(Japan)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1830 (2008) (S/2009/102)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-24991 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1830 (2008) (S/2009/102)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. De Mistura to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/102, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1830 (2008).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. I warmly welcome him this morning and give him the floor.

Mr. De Mistura: I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to brief it at a crucial point for Iraq in its empowerment to handle its own affairs. Over the past few months, the eyes of the international community have been turned towards a country immersed in pre-electoral activity as Iraqis prepared to cast their votes in the first governorate elections in four years. This undoubtedly has been the most significant political event of this reporting period.

The end of 2008 witnessed an acceleration of electoral activities and increased preparedness by the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, with all aspects of the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) completely geared for that period towards the electoral process.

Two months into 2009, Iraq has emerged sovereign and is rising to expectations. It successfully went through the first test by delivering the first fully Iraqi-led and owned elections. On 31 January, as planned, provincial elections were conducted in 14 governorates, with 42,000 polling stations, with a striking lack of violence. That marks a remarkable event in a country that has suffered through so much conflict in recent years. It is a tribute to the growing effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces and attests to the increased stability in the country.

With the Independent High Electoral Commission in the lead, Iraqis have demonstrated the capacity to run their own elections in what has been a daunting logistical and operational undertaking. Just look at the figures: 7.5 million Iraqis turned out to cast ballots, and 14,000 candidates, representing 400 political entities, vied for 440 seats. I am glad to say that there were 3,900 women among the 14,000 candidates.

These first polls which can have a direct impact on the day-to-day lives of Iraqis can, in fact, make a major difference with respect to the new local representatives, because they are directly accountable to their own voters: it was an open list. Furthermore, they sought to rectify a problem we had in the past, namely, the sectarian imbalance in local councils. This time there was no boycott whatsoever by any significant component of the Iraqi populace.

The Independent High Electoral Commission should be commended for its highly professional

efforts, both in the effective preparations in the lead-up to the elections and during their ultimately smooth conduct. Much should be attributed to the rigorous and professional field structure in place. Resisting political pressures, the Commission remained vigilant in carrying through with the procedures, from polling day to the announcement of final results three weeks later.

With constant and intensive assistance from UNAMI, the Iraqi Electoral Commission overcame every hurdle, every time; met operational timelines; came out of a rather complicated and contentious parliamentary debate some time ago over critical electoral legislation; regulated a complex formula for the allocation of seats and the representation of minorities and women; and concluded the adjudication of formal complaints, of which there have been as many as 2,000 to date.

Following the release of provisional results on 5 February, final results were announced on 19 February, based on all valid ballots cast, including special-needs votes and those of internally displaced persons and, where appropriate, adjusted for complaints. We are now looking at the possible final certification of results, after the short appeals period, before the second week of March. But we more or less know where we are. After that the challenge will be the formation of councils, and then the nomination of governors.

While it remains up to Iraqis to interpret the results of these elections, it is heartening how all this moved along smoothly, including the fact — which I must mention again, because it is something noteworthy — that there were about 110 women among the 440 new council members nominated.

The elections were recognized as credible and transparent, both by an impressive domestic observation effort of 490,000 local, national observers — almost as many as the Iraqi army — and 413 international monitors from 25 entities, coordinated by a European Union-sponsored adviser. These elections should increase the confidence of Iraqis in their own local institutions. I would like to say *mabrouk* — congratulations — to the Iraqi Ambassador, as we said to the Prime Minister the other day: this was something that would have been a challenge in any country.

But much will now depend on the elected leaders. They need to work within their own selected electoral system. They need to prove they are capable of promoting inclusive political dialogue, striking compromises and working in coalitions. In this regard, statements by a number of Iraqi political leaders, indicating their willingness to play a part in this process and to allow others to do so, are indeed very encouraging.

Elections have undoubtedly been the flagship of our mandate during this period, dominating our efforts in recent months. The year 2009 foresees continued electoral activities, with several possible electoral events in the coming months. These could include elections for the Kurdish National Assembly set for this summer — where we have already been asked to be involved — as well as possible sub-district elections, culminating in the national parliamentary elections towards the end of this year.

UNAMI will continue to provide a significant degree of technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission, as mandated by the Council and as requested by the Government and political parties of Iraq. It will also, as requested, support the Government's commitment to holding a census, which is long overdue. But UNAMI assistance, with the Council's approval, will not stop there. It will adjust to what Iraq requires at the next step of its transition.

One of these requirements is, obviously, national reconciliation. Iraq now needs to embrace this opportunity, to rise above sectarian interests and to be open to compromise and consensus. A country cannot truly attain sovereignty or achieve a lasting peace unless it instils confidence in its own institutions with respect to the rule of law and a unifying constitution, and unless it delivers basic needs. This implies a great deal of effort, and it is in this next stage that UNAMI is committed to fully support the Government of Iraq in this exercise of its own sovereignty and its assumption of accountability.

A particular concern, of which we are all aware, remains the lingering potential for tensions between the Arab and Kurdish sides in Iraq, which has had an impact on almost every aspect of Iraq's political life. This has been the cause of the lack of real progress on the vital oil law, revenue sharing and constitutional review, as well of the potential for tensions, such as the recent clashes in Khanaqin between the armed forces of the central Government and of the Kurdish region.

As we work as an honest broker, we try to promote a spirit of dialogue. UNAMI activities will see a particular shift after this electoral period and an emphasis on our initiative on the disputed internal boundaries and work on Kirkuk, including through the committee set up under article 23 of the provincial elections law. That committee is tasked by the Council of Representatives with finding a power-sharing formula for the provincial elections in Kirkuk, assessing property disputes and demographic issues.

Work in these areas, rightly a priority, is viewed as a means to contributing to lowering these sorts of tensions, in Kirkuk and elsewhere, and exploring new solutions for some of these most pressing issues. During my recent visit to Kirkuk this past December to engage with the wider community on the ground, I, frankly, detected a good momentum for Kirkukis to explore locally generated options regarding the administrative future of Kirkuk. I truly left encouraged that Kirkukis have a growing understanding of *kefaya* — enough that there is a need now to reach a compromise acceptable to all communities living there.

Part of my trip was to discuss the work of the article 23 committee, an important committee created in connection with electoral law and a very good body for introducing constructive proposals for finding a formula for the future of this area. The article 23 committee has been criticized as getting off to a slow start, so we conveyed to them the expectations and willingness of the local community to wake up and move on this, so that the committee could become more active. We have since contributed to removing some of the obstacles to its work. On 2 February, my political deputy facilitated and accompanied the committee's first visit to Kirkuk where they finally went and started working. We provided logistical, transport, security and organizational support.

We also offered secretariat support and, in fact, UNAMI has actively served as the de facto secretariat of the committee. The committee has now begun meeting, both in Bagdad and in Kirkuk. We have further offered UNAMI assistance in areas of technical expertise, and two consultants are just about to be deployed. Mediation potential will be available in case of disagreement.

UNAMI has been working in parallel on a comprehensive review of the so-called disputed areas in the governorates of Kirkuk, Salahaddin, Diyala and Ninawa, in line with its Security Council mandate and the consent given last year by the Iraqi leadership. Members will recall that the first reports came out last June. We have delayed submission of the remaining 11 reports, as we felt that we did not wish to take any initiatives in the weeks leading up to the elections. This was decided in consultation with the Prime Minister. We remain in consultation with the Iraqi Government and all concerned parties, to carefully determine the appropriate timing and process for the finalization of the whole package of analytical reports on these internally disputed areas.

We hope and believe that this package of reports will constitute probably the most in-depth and comprehensive analysis so far presented on these areas. They will examine different factors specific to the areas, including socio-economic indices, the electoral results of 2005 and 2009, injustices of past regimes, administrative history, and the post-2003 situation on the ground including demographics and security conditions. All of these make up a series of indicators that will be taken into consideration in these studies and analysis. But the ultimate responsibility for making any kind of decisions will continue to lie, first and foremost, with the Government of Iraq, the parties represented in the areas concerned, and the Kurdish regional leadership.

At the same time, the Iraqi leadership should be encouraged to advance on other fundamental issues on which we know they are interested in following up. These are at the core of tensions among the various communities. These issues include federalism, revenue-sharing and the sharing of Iraq's considerable resources, all within the framework of the constitutional review. UNAMI is available and ready to assist the Government in following up on these matters.

UNAMI will also remain committed to supporting the establishment of independent bodies, the most significant development being the legislation that has been passed providing for the creation of the Independent Human Rights Commission in Iraq.

As for international partnership, the United Nations will continue to assist the country in its standing in the international community through the International Compact for Iraq, Security Council mandates and relations with its neighbours.

On the regional front, recent months have seen the opening of embassies by Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, the Arab League and Syria. This is a very hopeful sign of the strengthened engagement with and within the region.

UNAMI will continue its involvement in this area according to its mandate, including through confidence-building bilateral initiatives and technical assistance to a support mechanism for regional cooperation based in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq. We remain in frequent contact with regional players and are committed to assisting Iraq's efforts to improve relations with its immediate neighbours. One important example has been the important relationship with Kuwait. We are hoping to be increasingly involved in helping on a number of tracks, including, for example, border maintenance, the question of missing archives and missing Kuwaitis, as well as compensation.

Most recently, we have pushed for a training project to build the capacity of Iraq's Ministry of Human Rights in the area of exhumations in order to address a pending issue, and we are facilitating the transfer of a certain number of identified tapes from Iraq to Kuwait, which will be witnessed by my friend and very active colleague Ambassador Tarasov in the coming days.

With regard to Iran, we welcome the announced establishment of a joint committee among Iraq, Iran and the United Nations to work with the Organization on demining and drug-trafficking control along the Iranian border. The committee is a tangible example of how we can facilitate concrete cooperation with regard to the border. We hope that it will soon become operational and eventually link up with the Abadan committee. We welcome the very constructive progress being made in Iraq's relations with Turkey, Jordan and, recently, Syria.

Iraq continues to make progress towards economic and social recovery. It needs to be congratulated — again, *mabrouk* — on the reforms that led to the recent cancellation of the Paris Club debt. This proves that achievement of the benchmarks of the Compact can yield immediate and positive results. It is now critical to translate those gains into concrete improvements in the lives of everyone in Iraq.

As Iraq assumes the full responsibilities of a sovereign State, its citizens will — like those of countries throughout the world — look to their leaders to provide better schools, jobs, electricity supplies and health services. Elections have proved that that is the platform on which they were overwhelmingly elected. The Iraqi people will increasingly consider improvements in those areas as the chief indicators of recovery and restored trust.

Social services and a market economy must recover from a quarter-century of hardship and conflict. For example, nearly one third of Iraq's young people are still unemployed. Many Iraqi children still attend schools with substandard classrooms, and safe water reaches only 40 per cent of Iraqi homes. There is a challenge. We know that the Iraqi Government is determined to meet that challenge, and we should help them.

Furthermore, low oil prices will make it even more important to appropriately prioritize strategies for development. Iraq's 2009 budget, now before the Council of Representatives, is 21 per cent lower than originally planned. Its capital investment portion has been cut by 38 per cent. This type of challenge is obviously being faced throughout the world, but Iraq is facing it in the context of a very delicate transitional period. That requires that investments be directed where they are most needed and can make the greatest impact on recovery and on the lives of everyone in Iraq.

These challenges can be met through a more efficient and transparent public sector and a stronger private sector. The United Nations will work with the Government to improve performance in those areas as required.

In the area of humanitarian assistance, where needs are more acute, the United Nations will continue to provide such assistance through the consolidated appeal for Iraq and the subregion. However, the appeal recognizes that the improvements in Iraq's humanitarian conditions have been substantial. Indeed, that is why we have reduced our humanitarian assistance: because Iraq has been taking many humanitarian emergencies into its own hands. The appeal also seeks to reduce the worst effects of poverty and conflict and to promote conditions conducive to the return of Iraq's displaced persons and refugees.

The International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, to which all members have contributed, will be coming to a close by 31 December, which will be a

historic date. I remember when it was created as a trust fund intended to keep Iraq alive. It has seen $1.3 billion channelled through it since its inception. As a result of the generous contributions of all members, in particular Japan and the European Union — to which we pay tribute — it has been an invaluable tool for promoting coordinated strategic assistance inside Iraq. I am also pleased to note that, at the recent meeting on the Fund held in Naples on 18 February, both the Government of Iraq and the donors welcomed the proposal by the Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian, Reconstruction and Development Affairs that a post-Fund mechanism be established — so that we do not lose a mechanism that has been useful — to make the Compact a more effective driver of Iraq's internal development and international partnership.

United Nations agencies, funds and programmes will also now review their own assistance frameworks in Iraq in order to promote greater compliance with the Paris Declaration, to align our work more closely with the newly prioritized Compact and to increase their presence in Baghdad to meet the challenges ahead. The International Compact for Iraq, jointly chaired by the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and our colleague and friend Ambassador Gambari, could be the primary vehicle for all such Iraq initiatives. Following the very successful Stockholm conference, Prime Minister Al-Maliki's initiative to review and reprioritize the Compact benchmarks has the potential to make the Compact an effective driver of further follow-up in this area.

In conclusion, we have grounds for optimism, and in this Chamber it is good to feel that way sometimes. I believe that all of us should be proud of that fact — particularly the representative of Iraq, on behalf of the Iraqi people. The Government of Iraq is clearly signalling that it recognizes that this is the year to demonstrate its ability to administer a State that enjoys broad support and intends to deliver basic services and security guarantees with the support of credible and independent institutions.

Security has improved, and Iraq has asserted its sovereignty; this is a year in which that has been clearly seen. With more sovereignty comes more responsibility — responsibility to each of Iraq's communities. This is the time to build on what has been achieved since the recent provincial elections, which were the first to have been fully led by Iraq. After prolonged suffering, Iraqis have made some substantially encouraging steps. It is now up to the Iraqis themselves to heal the wounds of the past and move ahead with a common vision. Trust among the people will increase through concrete, commonly shared steps, including a federal framework, the distribution of wealth, a viable revenue sharing system, the deft handling of Kirkuk and a formula for resolving the issue of disputed internal boundaries.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the members of the Security Council have consistently supported UNAMI in being proactive and results-oriented. We will continue those efforts. However, it is ultimately up to Iraqi leaders to make sound choices, and the international community should encourage and support them in that regard.

The President: I thank Mr. De Mistura for his very comprehensive briefing on the good progress that has been made during this period.

I now call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to express our thanks to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his efforts during the month of January. Our great appreciation goes to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and to the teams of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in Iraq and New York for their tireless work in assisting the Government and the people of Iraq.

After reviewing the report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNAMI, contained in document S/2009/102, my delegation would like to make the following comments.

In the political and security areas, today the people and the Government of Iraq are proud of their achievement in having held provincial elections, which took place in a democratic and stable security situation. The elections provided a great opportunity for competition among electoral blocs and political forces and gave Iraqi citizens the freedom to select those they considered most suitable to manage their provinces and to provide the services they expect from the provincial councils. The provincial councils will be given greater powers and budgets than the outgoing councils,

including the responsibility of playing a bigger role in the advancement of the provinces' building and reconstruction and provision of services as defined by the law of provincial assemblies.

The provincial elections witnessed the competition of 14,431 candidates, 3,912 of whom were women, belonging to 401 lists and competing for 440 seats throughout 14 provinces. Participating in the elections were more than 400 observers from the United Nations and more than 800 independent international observers, as well as observers representing the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union. The turnout of the elections, 51 per cent, was very good compared to participation rates in local elections in other countries.

The provincial elections that took place at the end of January are considered to be a turning point in Iraq's progress in the pursuit of building a new democracy because of the active participation of many Iraqis who boycotted the provincial elections in 2005. For example, the turnout in Ninawa was 60 per cent compared with 14 per cent during the previous elections, and Salah Ad Din province, which recorded the highest participation rate at 65 per cent, had only 15 per cent participation in the 2005 elections. The province of Anbar, where participation amounted to less than 1 per cent in 2005, reported a turnout of 40 per cent.

The participation of Iraqis who boycotted the elections in the past reflected a firm belief in elections as key mechanisms of democracy, as opposed to the use of violence to impose the will of one party on others. The Government considers the success of the elections to be an important development and a strong push towards the promotion of reconciliation and coexistence between the various components of the Iraqi people.

In accordance with the provisions of article 23 of the provincial elections law, the elections in Kirkuk have been postponed and a parliamentary committee formed to study options for power-sharing between the components of Kirkuk and to research the issues of conflict of ownership and demographic change. This committee hopes its report, when submitted to the Council of Representatives, will facilitate the process for provincial elections in Kirkuk. The Iraqi political forces agree on the substance of article 23 of the provincial elections law, which confirms the process to resolve the Kirkuk issue through constitutional and political means in order to preserve the full rights of all components of the province.

The success of the provincial elections as an important juncture in the political development of the new Iraq has caused many to express their admiration for the ability and potential the Iraqi people have shown in the preparation, organization, management and protection of their electoral process. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the circumstances surrounding the elections, saying they were impressively free of violence. Similarly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, said that the election process was well organized by staff who all followed the same procedures and that the Electoral Commission had shown independence. He expressed his admiration for the role of Iraqi security forces by saying that the elections had proven that the Iraqi Government is capable of generating security to ensure the electoral process.

The main message that the Iraqi people want conveyed to the world through the success of these elections is the emphasis they place on building a responsible democracy through the exercise of their rights within the context of public administration, as set forth in their Constitution, in order to strengthen the democratic experience in the new Iraq.

The completion of the provincial elections in an atmosphere almost completely free of any manifestation of violence, as opposed to the more than 80 security incidents during the elections of 2005, confirmed two basic facts. First, it demonstrated the great development in the capabilities of Iraqi Security Forces, which performed in a professional and qualified manner, and the effective presence of which was felt on the ground, making the elections the first witness of their efficiency, but not the last. This conclusion was also reached by the Secretary-General, who states in his report that "[the] almost complete absence of violence during the elections can to a large extent be attributed to the growing effectiveness of the Iraqi Security Forces" (*S/2009/102, para. 20*).

Secondly, the elections demonstrated the solid gains made in Iraq's security situation thanks to the Government's efforts to strengthen the political, security and law enforcement fields — the pillars of

stability in the country. Anti-terrorism authorities in Iraq oversaw the destruction of 51 terrorist networks in 2008, enhancing security gains achieved by the ongoing commitment of the Government of my country to support efforts towards national reconciliation and political dialogue with the various parties involved in the country's political process.

The Governments of Iraq and the United States have reached a new security agreement to organize the future bilateral partnership between our independent and sovereign nations which share the common goals of protecting and promoting the interests of our two countries and reinforcing Iraqi sovereignty and independence.

The termination of the mandate of the multinational force in Iraq is an important turning point for Iraq and the end of an era for the United Nations and for, above all, the countries contributing to the force. The multinational force has contributed vital support to the progress of building security and stability in Iraq and towards our transition to a sovereign, federal and united democracy.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Iraq, I wish to convey a very important message of thanks to the men and women of the multinational force in Iraq, who have courageously fought together with us on the frontline, as well as to their Governments.

The acceleration of improvement in the security situation in Baghdad and other provinces has helped to return life to normality in most areas. Displaced families returning to their places of origin numbered about 40,000 by the end of 2008, and one of the largest camps for internally displaced persons, in the province of Najaf, has been closed after the return to their places of origin of 300 families that were living there. My Government has been working tirelessly on the restitution of property, pursuant to order 101, and on assistance to returning displaced families, pursuant to order 102, by providing the appropriate conditions for their return to their livelihoods and their areas of origin.

Continued efforts by the Iraqi Government, in cooperation with international organizations and aid agencies, to secure the full return of the Christian families displaced by violence in some parts of Ninawa province late last year have led to the return of 2,400 out of 2,500 displaced families, and the Iraqi Government is still providing the remaining families with necessary assistance.

As part of the Iraqi Government's continuing efforts to ensure the return of displaced Iraqis in neighbouring countries, the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Mr. Abdul Samad Rahman Sultan, recently headed a ministerial delegation to Syria on the first leg of a trip that included stops in Egypt and Lebanon. The goal of the trip was to coordinate with these countries in organizing the return of Iraqis displaced onto their territory, and to explore with the immigration ministers of Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt the problems and constraints involved in the return of Iraqi citizens in order to develop effective mechanisms to overcome such problems and to contribute to the return of all Iraqis to their places of origin. It is important here to refer to the recent report issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which referred to the return of 220,000 Iraqis in 2008 and to the expected return of 500,000 Iraqis in 2009 due to the steady improvement of security in the country.

The Government of Iraq, convinced of the need to consolidate and strengthen the rights of the Iraqi people through the establishment of independent institutions dealing with the follow-up and monitoring of human rights, ratified on 14 January 2009 a law establishing a High Commission for Human Rights under the provisions of article 61 of the Iraqi Constitution. The Commission will strive to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights in Iraq and to protect the rights and freedoms set forth in the Constitution, laws, treaties, and international agreements ratified by Iraq.

My Government attaches particular importance to the issue of human rights for Iraqi detainees in custody pending criminal cases, as demonstrated by the creation of places of detention appropriately equipped to provide full legal immunities and procedures to ensure a fair trial. On 22 February 2009, the central Baghdad prison was opened to the press as part of the Iraqi Government's policy of ensuring the highest degree of transparency in following up on the conditions for detainees in Iraqi jails.

On the social and economic front, the tangible improvement in Iraq's political and security situation has had a positive effect on the national development strategy. A clear improvement has been recorded in

Iraqi economic indicators during the past few months. The rate of economic growth at the end of 2008 was 44.2 per cent. Inflation decreased from 16 per cent in 2007 to 12 per cent in the last quarter of 2008 as a result of financial policies aimed at decreasing inflation and improving the purchasing power of the Iraqi dinar. Unemployment has also decreased, falling from 17 per cent in 2008 to 15 per cent at the beginning of 2009. These economic indicators reflect a comprehensive improvement in the Iraqi economy.

Investment is a priority for the Iraqi Government's national financial and economic policies. The Government has allocated $12 billion of the national budget for investment activities for all Iraqi ministries and has established a national monitoring mechanism to encourage Iraqi ministries to spend the allocated investment funds on their projects.

My Government, in the light of obligations under the International Compact with Iraq, has signed a number of bilateral agreements with Paris Club countries by which those countries are to cancel nearly $45 billion of our total national debt, which totals more than $52 billion. A bilateral agreement and memorandum of understanding have also recently been signed with Greece and China, under which our debt to those countries is reduced by 80 per cent.

The Iraqi Government has established a social security network to support different social sectors, including orphans, widows and the unemployed. The Government has allocated 800 million dinar for this purpose and increased the number of small loans to 120,000 for 2009 from 75,000 in 2008.

Within the framework of economic policies aimed at reconstructing the Iraqi industrial sector, the Government has allocated an investment budget of up to $697 million to the Ministry of Industry for the rebuilding many of its ministerial institutions in an effort to diversify sources of national income.

With regard to the oil industry, the Iraqi Government has adopted new policies to reconstruct and develop this field. According to the latest reports issued by the Iraqi Oil Ministry, oil production increased by 11 per cent in 2008 and daily production increased from 1.85 million barrels to 2.28 million barrels. The Iraqi Government has also joined the international Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative to establish a monitoring mechanism for its oil revenues and ways of spending them.

In the area of basic services, the Iraqi Government has reduced the proportion of the population deprived of water and sewage systems to 10 per cent in urban areas and 30 per cent in rural areas. The production of electricity has risen significantly during the last three months, and the Iraqi Government has allocated more than $3 billion to the Ministry of Electricity to build new power stations.

In the framework of the Iraqi Government's efforts to support the educational process in the country, the Ministry of Education has signed bilateral cooperation protocols with support organizations such as UNICEF and the Iraqi Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. This initiative supports the Government's national plan for the building of schools, under which, so far, 291 schools have been constructed and 374 restored to receive students in the current school year.

At the regional and international levels, the Iraqi Government continues its efforts to monitor and coordinate the work of the committees on refugees, energy and security within the framework adopted at the meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Expanded Neighbouring Countries of Iraq held in Sharm el-Sheikh and Istanbul. The Refugees Committee held its meeting in Amman on 15 November 2008. The Security Coordination Committee meeting was held in Damascus on 22 and 23 November 2008. I would like to stress my Government's commitment to cooperating fully with our neighbouring countries to reach solutions to all issues of mutual interest.

The past few months have seen mutual visits between a number of Iraqi and international officials. This month, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier paid visits to Iraq. The President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, visited Kuwait to participate in the Arab Economic Summit, and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki visited Iran and Turkey to develop mechanisms for bilateral cooperation with both countries. It should also be noted that the Iraqi-Kuwaiti joint committee is to hold a meeting in Kuwait this month to sign an accord to ensure a common vision for resolving the outstanding issues between the two countries and, in mid-March of next year, will hold a meeting at the ministerial level.

Following the first annual review of the International Compact with Iraq held in Stockholm, the Iraqi Government has taken many steps to enhance and

support policies to accomplish all requirements through the Joint Monitoring Matrix of 2008, in which the necessary steps to launch the administrative and financial reform process were determined. In this regard, my delegation would like to encourage all Arab countries to help their brothers in Iraq by forgiving Iraq's debt and reducing its compensation obligations imposed after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a crime committed by the former dictatorial regime. My Government welcomes the Kuwaiti Government's agreement to address the issue of compensation through bilateral negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations Compensation Commission.

In the framework of positive cooperation with the United Nations and our brothers in Kuwait, during meetings of the technical subcommittee early next month and in the presence of United Nations High-Level Coordinator, Mr. Gennady Tarasov, my Government will hand over a large number of audio and video tapes to Kuwait as a gesture of goodwill and in order to gather impetus for nations to terminate the international mandate relating to this file.

In reference to the recommendation contained in paragraph 72 of the report of the Secretary-General, my Government strongly supports the process of reviewing those Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq subsequent to resolution 661 (1990) and in accordance with the fifth operative paragraph of resolution 1859 (2008). These reviews represent a key step in support of the international community's efforts to normalize relations between Iraq and its neighbours and contribute to security and stability in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to stress my Government's gratitude for UNAMI's role in Iraq and for Mr. De Mistura's support, offered at the Government's request and based on mutually agreed mechanisms.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make a statement.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for the report he has just given us of the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I also thank the Permanent Representative of Iraq for the extremely valuable information he has conveyed to us.

To begin with a very general observation, we are encouraged by the positive developments in the situation in Iraq, which were very well underscored in the presentations we have just heard. We note in particular the success of the democratic provincial elections held on 31 January 2009, which represent a first in Iraq's political life. In a country facing internal conflict and violence, the elections were eloquent testimony to the capacity of the Iraqi forces to guarantee the security of the people and a reassuring omen for the upcoming legislative elections. The lack of any major incident during the entire electoral period is a clear indication that the Iraqis are gradually reasserting control over their country and their future.

Another element to be taken into consideration in the general easing of tensions is the conclusion on 27 November 2008 of the bilateral security agreement between the United States and Iraq concerning the progressive withdrawal of United States forces and the transfer of authorities to the Iraqi Government.

With respect to the activities of UNAMI itself, we are gratified to note that the Mission continues to make an important contribution to national reconstruction efforts in Iraq. In particular, the personal involvement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the outstanding role played by UNAMI were decisive to the organization of democratic, free and transparent elections and to the improvement of the political and institutional processes.

Another achievement to be attributed to UNAMI is its technical assistance in settling the various internal border disputes and in the search for consensus on the status of Kirkuk. Equally deserving of praise are UNAMI's investment in a regional dialogue through the strengthening of bilateral relations between Iraq and its neighbours, as well as its ongoing constitutional and legislative support in the context of the development of Iraqi national institutions. We cannot fail, either, to mention UNAMI's commitment to humanitarian assistance.

On the economic front, the International Compact with Iraq is playing an ever more critical role within the existing mechanisms for the reconstruction of Iraq. In that regard, we welcome the United Nations assistance strategy concluded between the Iraqi Government and the Organization for the period 2008-2010, which fully satisfies expectations in that respect,

as well as the cancellation of Iraq's debt by the Paris Club.

However, the United Nations and the entire international community must extend further support to the Iraqi Government, which now faces a budgetary deficit due to the fall in oil prices, and assist it in meeting the challenge of socio-economic development. That aspect of development now appears to be more critical than ever to Iraq, where the positive political developments on the ground must be reflected in a reduction of poverty and improved delivery of basic social services. Furthermore, that improvement should be extended to the field of human rights, which remains at the heart of UNAMI's concerns, although the role of the Iraqi Government and of the multinational force are also crucial in that regard.

We welcome the progress represented by the enactment by the Council of Representatives on 16 November 2008 of the law establishing an Independent High Commission for Human Rights, and the commitment of the Iraqi authorities to work with UNAMI to ensure the Commission's proper functioning.

With the reduced role of the multinational force, which will lead to an enhanced role for UNAMI, particularly with respect to security, it would be highly advisable, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/102), to provide the Mission with a new operational base endowed with a reliable logistical infrastructure in order to strengthen its autonomy and its capacity to discharge its mandate effectively and fully. We are pleased to note that UNAMI is already at work on that plan, and it is our hope that it will achieve concrete results.

We urge the international community to continue to support the Mission at this critical phase of its operations. In conclusion, we fully support Iraq and encourage it in its efforts to achieve national recovery at every possible level.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for his detailed briefing today on the situation in Iraq and the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). My delegation thanks Mr. De Mistura for his work and for his contribution and commitment to the development of political dialogue and national reconciliation in Iraq.

We also thank Ambassador Hamid Al Bayati, Permanent Representative of Iraq, for his comprehensive presentation on the recent progress made by his country.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/102) before the Security Council today is of special importance, for two fundamental reasons.

First, it represents the first time that the Council has been informed on the situation in Iraq since the expiration of the mandate of the multinational force and since the bilateral security agreement between the United States and Iraq entered into force. Pursuant to that agreement, the United States forces will be placed under the authority of the Iraqi Government for the remainder of their presence in the country. That concrete fact is deeply symbolic for my country, particularly given the conditions in which the war in Iraq unfolded and the subsequent establishment of the multinational force. The facts behind those developments are well known, and Mexico has expressed its views thereon on previous occasions. The bilateral security agreement also represents a tremendous achievement for the Government and people of Iraq because, through it and with the help of the provisions of resolution 1859 (2008), adopted in December, Iraq will gradually recover its international position as a sovereign and independent State.

Secondly, the Secretary-General's report has been submitted in the context of the provincial elections held on 31 January. We thank the Independent High Electoral Commission and the staff of UNAMI for playing key roles in ensuring that the elections were carried out in the optimal conditions. We were particularly pleased to note that the electoral process unfolded calmly and without major incident, as noted by several national and international observers. Their success demonstrates the commitment of the people of Iraq to democracy.

The results of the elections, announced in early February, represented a triumph for the people of Iraq and for democracy as a whole. Iraqis have turned once again to the ballot box to settle their political disputes, thereby contributing to the process of national reconciliation essential to the establishment of normal living conditions for the majority of the people.

The successful implementation of the national security plan for the elections undoubtedly favoured voter participation, in particular among the Sunni

population, which refrained from participating in the 2005 provincial elections. This time, they were part of the process. We hope that the results of the electoral process will promote political dialogue between the various players in Iraq and consolidate the national reconciliation process. We also hope that this exercise will lay the foundations for the preparation of national elections in December 2009.

Despite the great and important progress to which we have been witness in recent months, significant challenges remain in Iraq that must be faced with the support of the international community and the United Nations. In the area of security, the situation on the ground is fundamentally different to that of previous years. However, we continue to receive numerous reports of indiscriminate attacks against civilians, Iraqi armed forces, foreign forces and United Nations personnel. We are confident in the ability of the Government and the armed forces of Iraq to continue to deal with this major serious problem, with consistent respect for human rights.

The continuing situation of insecurity has led in recent years to continuous flows of internally displaced persons and refugees, which undermines Iraq's long-term development. We therefore welcome the report that some 40,000 families repatriated to Iraq have been registered to date. We invite the Iraqi authorities to continue to work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to pursue this process, ensuring that the dignity of individuals is respected at all times. We also welcome the adoption of the law establishing an Independent High Commission for Human Rights. We hope that the establishment of the Commission, along with the commitments arising from Iraq's recent ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, will lead to progress on human rights, in particular with respect to the situation of detainees, the administration of justice and women's rights.

Likewise, we are closely following the work on a comprehensive rule of law strategy, under United Nations auspices. We consider that only through institution-building can long-term political and economic success be guaranteed in Iraq.

I recognize the work of UNAMI in Iraq and the important role it has played in establishing the situation we now see on the ground. As international financing for reconstruction and development diminishes, the work of UNAMI becomes even more relevant, in particular its strategies to support the fight against poverty and initiatives towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, its work to protect ethnic and religious minorities and its efforts to strengthen the education and health sectors. In addition, UNAMI will have an invaluable opportunity to continue to help the people and the Government of Iraq through key initiatives such as the International Compact for Iraq, the holding of local and national elections, the national assistance strategy and the establishment of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights.

For Mexico, it is important that UNAMI, together with other relevant actors, continue to give priority to supporting the approximately 2.8 million internally displaced persons. We therefore welcome the establishment of the cooperation mechanism of the 2009 consolidated appeal, which the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has promoted with a view to helping the most vulnerable people within the country, to supporting refugees in conditions of security and dignity, and to promoting a regional approach to guarantee the security of Iraqis. Likewise, it is important that UNAMI continue its work in the constitutional review process under way in Iraq. That will help Iraq to consolidate the rule of law and provide guarantees for Iraqis in the sphere of civil and political rights.

In our view, we should continue to pay close attention to UNAMI's role as an intermediary in resolving controversies on internal borders and the status of Kirkuk, which are indispensable elements for lasting peace in Iraq.

The meeting of the objectives I have just described and the significant progress we have seen in recent months in the light of a new international situation indicate that 2009 holds a promising future for Iraq. This should be consolidated with the support of the United Nations and the international community.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his comprehensive briefing. We welcome our brother, Mr. Hamid Al Bayati, Permanent Representative of Iraq, and we thank him for his valuable contribution to our discussion today.

In our view a recent political development in Iraq is of great importance: the holding of provincial elections in January in 14 out of Iraq's 18 governorates. This is reason for optimism, in particular because of the high level of participation in the elections, which is especially encouraging owing to the participation of certain sectors and factions that had boycotted the previous elections, held in 2005. We are also gratified by the continued improvement in security conditions, with a major decline in violence and the absence of significant incidents on election day. This further underscores the continuing improvement in the capacity of Iraqi security forces and the decline in sectarian sensitivities.

We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for their efforts to support the Independent High Electoral Commission during the preparations for the elections held on 31 January, and for their endeavours to resolve disputes with regard to Iraq's internal borders. We urge UNAMI and the Special Representative to continue to play their neutral role in building confidence among the parties concerned, in encouraging dialogue and consultation and in working together with the Iraqi Government to achieve consensus among all parties concerned.

We stress the importance of continued dialogue among Iraqi actors concerning federalism and hydrocarbon regulation, which are two important issues that must be resolved in order to bring about long-term stability in Iraq. We look forward to the discussions to be held before the parliamentary recess, which will continue to follow up the round table hosted by UNAMI with a view to identifying specific, concrete and feasible solutions.

We congratulate our Iraqi brethren on the Paris Club's cancellation of Iraq's debt in December 2008. This is recognition of Iraqi efforts to attain the internationally agreed development goals and of Iraq's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This augurs well for the country's economic and social development. We welcome the fact that the United Nations and the World Bank established an Iraq Partners Forum in November 2008 in order to coordinate the strategies of donors and of the United Nations for Iraq and to ensure the greatest possible transparency and effectiveness.

With respect to the humanitarian situation, we are most satisfied with the continued return and repatriation of Iraqi internally displaced persons and refugees. Nearly 40,000 returnee families had been registered in Iraq as of the end of 2008, which is a great achievement, and one of Iraq's largest camps for internally displaced persons, in Najaf, was closed. But we are still gravely concerned at the continued presence of millions of Iraqi refugees outside the country, in particular in neighbouring countries. We hope that the Iraqi Government will attach priority to their return and will bring about the appropriate circumstances for that to take place. Moreover, we would like to express our satisfaction at the decline in the rate of cholera infection and we welcome the deployment of an international field mission under the leadership of the World Health Organization in the affected provinces.

Despite the progress achieved in the humanitarian field throughout 2008, the circumstances of the vulnerable sectors of the Iraqi people and the internally displaced persons are still a source of concern. Even relief programmes have been delayed because of the lack of funding and, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/102) notes, 1 million Iraqis still face food insecurity and a further 6 million would be exposed to food insecurity were it not for the social security network, primarily the public distribution of food rations.

We note the rise in the illiteracy level to 24 per cent in southern Iraq and that the school drop-out rate has reached 10 per cent, while the level of chronic child malnutrition in the South has reached nearly 22 per cent. With regard to northern Iraq, it is still suffering unstable and fluctuating power supplies, which is a very important element in the living conditions of the people. We support the United Nations call for investment to be concentrated in those areas where the weakest humanitarian and development indicators have been registered, as well as those affected by conflict-related violence and population movements.

There has been concrete progress towards ensuring the human rights of Iraqi citizens through the enactment of a law establishing an Independent High Commission for Human Rights, but we are still concerned by the killings of some political candidates and electoral workers and the displacement of nearly 2,400 families from their homeland in Mosul at the end

of 2008, as well as by killings of and other attacks on journalists, teachers, parliamentarians, humanitarian workers, judges and lawyers.

We are gravely concerned by the occupying forces' continued detention of more than 15,000 people, including 58 children, without arrest warrants issued by Iraqi judges. I would like to underscore our concern with regard to the general conditions of the detainees under Iraqi custody, as noted in paragraph 47 of the Secretary-General's report. Some have been deprived of their freedom for months and years in substandard conditions, without access to defence counsel and without being formally charged with a crime or brought before a judge.

We welcome the end of the mandate of the multinational force in Iraq and the Iraqi Government's assumption of responsibility for security in the country. We look forward to the full withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq as soon as possible and the reunification of the Iraqi people, and welcome the emphasis on its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We would like to emphasize that the continued presence of the occupying forces in any form could be a factor for disunity and instability and would not contribute to national reconciliation, which is considered to be an indispensable condition for the stability, reconstruction and economic growth of Iraq.

The situation in Iraq has changed since the Security Council adopted resolution 661 (1990). It is time for the Council to review that resolution and for Iraq to recover the legal and international status that prevailed before the adoption of that resolution and the sanctions imposed on it in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Here, we would like to recall the request to the Secretary-General to prepare a report on this matter in consultation with the Iraqi Government in accordance with resolution 1859 (2008). We look forward to the issuance of that report and to the Council's subsequent adoption of measures in that regard.

In conclusion, we would like to express our great appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the various United Nations agencies working on Iraq's reconstruction. We call upon all States to support Iraq in order to help its brotherly people.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative De Mistura for his important and informative briefing. We are also grateful for the statement made by Ambassador Al Bayati and the encouraging developments that he has pointed to in his country. We commend the determined and courageous work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We deeply appreciate the Special Representative's dedication to Iraq and its people, in particular against the background of the difficult circumstances he and his team continue to encounter.

The support provided by UNAMI to the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Government of Iraq's diligent preparation of the recent provincial elections have clearly contributed to their successful conduct. Above all, however, the people of Iraq are to be congratulated on their active participation in those elections. By turning out across communitarian lines, the men and women of Iraq have thus helped their country to take a significant step towards the consolidation of democratization and national reconciliation.

The security preparations by the Government of Iraq provided voters with an environment in which they were able to cast their votes with confidence and in relative security. While we deplore some of the grave incidents and acts of violence that took place in the run-up to the elections, the day of the election itself passed in a peaceful atmosphere.

We are confident that Iraqi leaders will seize the momentum created by the elections to overcome obstacles towards national reconciliation. In that context, we welcome the fact that UNAMI has been formally requested to continue to provide assistance to the parliamentary committee dealing with issues of power-sharing, property and demography regarding Kirkuk. We strongly support the good offices of the Special Representative in building confidence among the parties with a view to achieving a sustainable solution.

We encourage Iraq to make maximum use of the support provided by UNAMI in the constitutional review process, in particular as regards hydrocarbon regulation. Let me add that progress in that area will certainly also facilitate foreign investment in the country.

The European Union and its member States remain firmly committed to supporting Iraq in building a secure, stable, democratic, unified and prosperous

country where human rights can be enjoyed in a secure environment by women and men alike.

We note the gradual improvement of the security situation in recent months, but we must not lose sight of the persistent security risk that average Iraqis continue to face through indiscriminate attacks, including by suicide bombers. The recent attack on pilgrims en route to Karbala, with many women and children amongst the dead, testifies to that ever-present threat.

As others have said, there are still important challenges in the area of human rights. As has also been mentioned, the report highlights the situation of detainees. It also pays particular attention to the situation of women, children and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities.

We hope that the return of a significant number of Christian families to Mosul is an indication of their growing confidence in their personal safety. There must be no room for ethnic or sectarian violence. Everyone must make every effort to ensure that events like those of the fall of 2008 do not reoccur.

We welcome the commitment made by the Iraqi Government to strengthen the protection of human rights and the recent establishment of an Independent High Commission for Human Rights, to which the Special Representative referred. We hope that the High Commission will soon become operational. We support and commend the important work of UNAMI in the area of human rights.

We welcome the priority that United Nations agencies intend to place on countering violence against women during the year 2009, improving the access of women to justice and tackling the reform of discriminatory penal codes. We encourage the Iraqi leadership to seek to engage women in the rebuilding of Iraqi society and to continue the efforts that have already begun in that area.

We hope that the forensic capacity-building that the UNAMI Human Rights Office has offered to the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights will help to advance progress in clarifying the fate of Kuwaiti citizens who have been missing since 1990, a point to which the Ambassador also referred.

With regard to the situation of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons, we hope that an environment permitting their return in safety and dignity can be sustained and that the Government of Iraq will actively continue to promote return initiatives. We hope that the encouraging trend to which the Ambassador has referred will continue. Austria commends the humanitarian work of the United Nations and — this is particularly important — the continued solidarity of neighbouring countries, especially Jordan and Syria, with those uprooted by violence and conflict.

We welcome the intention of the United Nations to devise a comprehensive rule of law strategy in cooperation with other partners on the ground, as well as efforts under way between Iraqi authorities, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna to assess compliance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Together with our European Union partners, we continue to support the training of Iraqi law enforcement and security personnel in the framework of the European Union Integrated Rule of Law Mission, which has been extended until 30 June 2009. Since its start in July 2005, approximately 2,000 Iraqi criminal law experts have been trained in 87 courses. Austria is happy to have been able to participate in those important efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of Austria's wholehearted support for his work and the work of the entire United Nations team in Iraq.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Can I begin by joining colleagues in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura for his briefing on the report (S/2009/102) of the Secretary-General. I would also like to pay tribute to the Permanent Representative of Iraq for the remarkable progress that Iraq has made in recent months, as set out in his statement.

The United Nations continues to play a vital role in Iraq's development as a stable and democratic country that is increasingly in control of its own destiny. On behalf of my Government, I would like to thank the United Nations Iraq team for its work.

No country has taken up more of the Security Council's time and energy over the past 20 years than Iraq. It is wonderful to see Iraq restored to a fully respected position in the international community, and

for the Council to be able to deal with its few remaining responsibilities in such an encouraging atmosphere. Since we discussed the last report (S/2008/688) of the Secretary-General, in November, Iraq has passed two more important milestones. The first was at midnight on 31 December 2008, when the Government of Iraq took responsibility for maintaining security throughout the country. That is a testament to the progress that has been made by both the Government and the Iraqi security forces over the past almost six years. With violence at its lowest levels since 2003, Iraq's security situation continues to improve.

The second milestone was the provincial elections, about which Mr. De Mistura has reported in detail. The Secretary-General has termed them the first fully Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned elections. The electoral legislation was Iraqi. The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, working with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), put in place the processes and mechanisms to ensure a free and fair ballot, and the Iraqi security forces provided comprehensive security and ensured that there were no significant security incidents on election day. Significantly, the elections were both competitive and inclusive. Voting was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere and freedom of expression was widely respected. The diverse representation in the new provincial councils shows that democracy is taking root in Iraq.

As the Secretary-General acknowledges in his report, it is now important for Iraq's political leaders to prioritize national dialogue and reconciliation, finding common ground on issues such as the hydrocarbons legislation and the review of the Constitution. The United Kingdom strongly supports UNAMI's efforts behind that process, in particular its work on disputed internal boundaries and on the status of Kirkuk, which the Special Representative reported on. We look forward to the report on Kirkuk from the article 23 committee of Iraq's Council of Representatives, which we expect at the end of next month.

We also welcome the establishment of Iraq's Independent High Commission for Human Rights. We encourage it to work with the Ministry of Human Rights in helping to ensure that the rights of all Iraqis are respected.

The United Nations is doing vital work across all the policy sectors in Iraq, from supporting elections, constitution and political development, the rule of law and humanitarian assistance to economic development. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's intention to continue to expand the engagement and presence of the United Nations throughout Iraq. We also await with interest his report pursuant to resolution 1859 (2008) on the Saddam-era resolutions. We should look carefully at all the additional obligations imposed on Iraq during the Saddam era, with a predisposition to removing them so that Iraq can achieve the international standing equal to that that it held before the Council's adoption of resolution 661 (1990).

I would like to conclude by outlining the further evolution in the United Kingdom's close relationship with Iraq. The British Prime Minister announced on 18 December 2008 that British combat troops will withdraw from Basra in the coming months. Our current military tasks should be completed by 31 May, allowing the majority of our forces to withdraw from Iraq by the end of July. Our military drawdown reflects the improvements in the security situation in Iraq. It marks a change in the nature of our commitment to Iraq as Iraq increasingly stands on its own feet. The United Kingdom's future relationship with Iraq will be one of partnership and friendship across the board, encompassing economic, commercial, cultural and educational cooperation, as well as assistance with security and defence.

The United Kingdom strongly believes that a strong and stable Iraq that is at peace with its neighbours and has taken its rightful place in the international community will make a crucial contribution to strategic stability and peace throughout the Middle East.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I, too, would like to thank our friend Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for his briefing to the Council. I should also like to commend the courageous, determined and effective efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in carrying out the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council. I also wish to thank our colleague the Permanent Representative of Iraq for his detailed briefing on developments in the situation.

As he himself emphasized, there has been significant progress in Iraq in recent months towards the establishment of a secure, stable, democratic, united and prosperous country where human rights are respected. France congratulates the Government of Iraq on its efforts in that regard. We reiterate our willingness to continue and strengthen our contribution to ensuring stability and prosperity in Iraq.

The holding of provincial elections on 31 January 2009 was an important step towards strengthening democracy and reconciliation. As was the case, it is important that the elections were well-organized and conducted in an inclusive manner and in an overall peaceful environment. This month, the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the ministers for foreign affairs of the European Union have welcomed the holding of those elections.

The elections were, first and foremost, a triumph for the people of Iraq, who have assumed full ownership of the democratic process. France is very pleased that the Iraqis are increasingly reassuming full responsibility for their country's affairs. The Iraqi Government should also be congratulated on having organized these elections. Finally, we welcome the key role played by UNAMI, in support of the Independent High Electoral Commission, in preparing the elections.

As noted by European Union Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 23 February, it is important to take advantage of the outcome of the elections to make further progress on improving the living conditions of the Iraqi people and on the process of national reconciliation. This means continuing the positive commitment of the Iraqi Government, of the entire international community and of neighbouring States.

I would like to focus briefly on four important areas in this regard. First of all, the disputed internal boundaries are an issue, particularly with regard to Kirkuk. This issue will be a focus of attention, as the Secretary-General emphasized in his report. UNAMI must continue to provide its expertise to the Iraqi Government in order to make progress on this question, as well as on the matter of constitutional review. Success in this difficult task will depend in large part on — and will be a gauge of — the willingness of all actors to work towards a compromise.

Secondly, reconstruction and economic growth are also great challenges for the coming year. The Iraqi people expect concrete results. France has cancelled €4 billion, or $5 billion, of Iraqi debt, and we are prepared to contribute in all areas requested by the Iraqi authorities.

Thirdly, UNAMI must also continue to support the efforts of neighbouring countries to make progress in the areas of energy, security, borders and refugees and internally displaced persons. We also believe that its assistance will be useful in supporting the regional dialogue that should continue on issues such as disappeared persons and property seized during the Gulf war. Neighbouring States, of course, have a major role to play in this respect, and we appreciate the reference to these relationships that was made by the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

Finally, efforts must also continue with regard to respect for human rights, including with regard to the situation of prisoners. As noted by the Secretary-General, the creation of an Independent High Commission for Human Rights is a positive first step.

The visit of the President of the French Republic to Iraq on 10 February was a solemn indication of France's resolute support for democracy, for the restoration of sovereignty and for reconstruction efforts in Iraq. This visit followed two visits by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, in August 2007 and June 2008. These visits provided an opportunity to clearly demonstrate the solidarity of France. At the same time, we have cancelled debt and have actively participated in the European Union programme for training Iraqi civil servants under the Union's Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq. Depending on the wishes of the Iraqi authorities, we could deploy our efforts in all institutional and economic areas.

More generally speaking, it is important that the present positive cycle will enable Iraq to recover its full sovereignty. In this respect, we would recall the request made by the Security Council in resolution 1859 (2008) for the Secretary-General to prepare a report after consultations with Iraq on the action necessary to enable Iraq to recover international standing equal to that which it held prior to the adoption of resolution 661 (1990) of August 1990.

As was indicated by the French President in Baghdad on 10 February, Iraq can count on the friendship of France as we work with it towards its full reintegration into the community of nations.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): Uganda welcomes the holding of this open debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the briefing by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and head of UNAMI. We also welcome the briefing by the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

From those briefings it is clear that significant progress has been made. We welcome the successful holding of provincial elections on 31 January. We note with appreciation that those elections were more representative and inclusive of the various political sectors of Iraqi society. We encourage the Iraqi people to build on these achievements, which create a more stable and peaceful Iraq in which all the people of Iraq can live in peace.

To that end, Uganda also commends the leading role played by UNAMI in assisting and supporting the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq as well as the earlier interim Government and transitional National Assembly of Iraq.

We note from the report that a number of Iraqi political leaders have indicated their willingness to play a constructive role in national dialogue and reconciliation as a way of ensuring sustainable and lasting peace. In spite of progress made, there remain key challenges. I would like to mention a few of them.

One challenge is to develop an effective security sector, as well as civil and social services capacities. A second is the delivery of reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance. A third is the protection of human rights and national reconciliation as well as judicial and legal reform, which are needed in order to strengthen the rule of law in Iraq. The fourth is the eradication of acts of terrorism and violence. Finally, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons needs to be facilitated. On this last point, we are happy to note the increasing returns of Iraqis to their country.

We note that despite these numerous socio-economic challenges, the Government of Iraq continues to make commendable efforts to meet internationally agreed development targets, including the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, we welcome the Paris Club's cancellation of about 80 per cent of Iraq's debt, as well as the establishment of an Iraq Partners Forum. There is no doubt that this will go a long way in helping Iraq realize the targets set out in the International Compact for Iraq.

Uganda welcomes the commitments made to the Iraq Trust Fund, amounting to $1.36 billion as of December 2008. We call upon the Government of Iraq and international partners to ensure that the approved projects and programmes are implemented expeditiously while ensuring that they create an impact in the reconstruction of Iraq and improve the standards of living of the people of Iraq.

Finally, in spite of the economic challenges, there is a need to ensure that public funding for reconstruction and development activities is not unduly reduced, as this would affect the recovery process.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): I would first like to thank Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Ambassador Al Bayati, for their extensive briefings.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the excellent worked carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Their dedication and commitment to help Iraq accomplish its goals are indeed most commendable.

As a neighbour of Iraq, Turkey is particularly interested in the promotion of stability and the advancement of security in Iraq. We have equally good relations with all segments of the Iraqi population, be they Arabs, Kurds or Turkmens. Our only message is one of good will and cooperation.

That is why we are happy to see that, after many years of war, internal strife and destruction, Iraq is finally striving towards a more sustainable environment of security and stability. The Iraqi people greatly deserve to enjoy peace and prosperity.

It was against that backdrop that we closely followed the provincial elections held in late January, including by sending observers from Turkey. Overall, despite certain shortcomings, the elections served their purpose quite successfully. They helped to bridge an important gap in representation in Iraqi politics. They also reinforced the democratic process in Iraq.

In short, Iraq has made a good start in 2009, a year that, we believe, will be crucial in shaping its future. Indeed, the provincial elections, as important as they might be, are only a first step in the consolidation of democracy and democratization in Iraq. There are certain challenges that remain to be addressed, such as reviewing the Constitution in a way that will unify

Iraqis as a whole; settling the issues of the disputed internal administrative boundaries and, in particular, the status of Kirkuk in a way that will help preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq; peacefully transferring security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces in a way that will not create a power vacuum in the country after the withdrawal of the multinational force; adopting the long-overdue hydrocarbon resources law in a way that will create an investment-friendly environment and help all Iraqis to benefit fully from their country's strategic energy resources; and reaching an accord on income-sharing arrangements in a way that will strengthen the sense of Iraqi nationhood and union. These are all issues of priority.

The parliamentary elections to be held at the end of this year will be another important milestone in the democratic evolution of Iraq. We hope that, by that time, these priority issues will have been resolved in a constructive and consensual manner, making it possible for these achievements to be crowned with fair and free elections.

I know that the wide array of issues to which I have just referred present a most daunting task. However, failure is not an option. In that regard, we believe that a three-pronged process is best suited to enabling us to attain our common objectives in Iraq.

The first aspect of this joint venture concerns the responsibility of Iraqis themselves. By that, I mean the obligation of all political parties in Iraq to work with one another in good faith and cooperation with a view to ensuring that the solutions to many of the predicaments being faced will be found through compromise rather than confrontation. We hope and expect that the political representatives of the Iraqi people will rise to the occasion and reconcile their differences. The Iraqi people have already rewarded those who have made the right promises; now it is time to deliver.

The second set of responsibilities in this process lies with the countries in the region. Indeed, those countries, sharing the same geography, have a special stake in seeing Iraq effectively tackle these challenges, many of which have direct implications for the whole region and beyond. We must all do whatever we can to support the development and reconstruction of Iraq. We are committed to further advancing the regional cooperation to which we have contributed, including by initiating the Iraq neighbours forum seven years ago. The forum is now operating in an extended format.

Indeed, Turkey has long provided an essential lifeline for the flow of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Iraq. Today, the volume of bilateral trade is rapidly rising, along with all other aspects of our economic cooperation. In particular, helping Iraq to tap its vast energy resources and to export them to world markets through reliable outlets, such as Turkey, remains a priority for us.

In parallel, our political cooperation has also reached an exemplary level. In that context, reciprocal visits by the two Prime Ministers have created strong momentum by further enhancing our bilateral relations, as evidenced by the establishment of the high-level strategic cooperation council. Our President will soon reciprocate the official visit made by President Talabani, which is expected to give a further boost to our relations. Taking this opportunity, I am also pleased to announce that, in addition to the one in Mosul, our new Consulate General in Basra has recently become operational.

We also attach great importance to cooperation with Iraq in the fight against terrorism. As will be recalled, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) terrorist organization has long used northern Iraq as a springboard for its cross-border terrorist attacks against targets in Turkey. The PKK's presence in northern Iraq also poses serious problems for and a threat to the people of Iraq. Initially, we had our differences on how to best tackle that problem. Today, however, we are pleased to see both central and local Iraqi authorities showing more signs of cooperation in countering that scourge. Indeed, the trilateral mechanism recently set up by Turkey, Iraq and the United States to coordinate a joint response to that vicious terrorist organization has made an encouraging start, and we now expect it to yield more effective and tangible results in preventing Iraqi territory from being used for such cross-border terrorist activities.

The third and final set of responsibilities in helping Iraq to achieve its goals rests with the international community. Indeed, Iraq cannot be seen as a merely regional issue, because the future course of events there will have repercussions reaching far beyond the region.

In that regard, the United Nations must continue to play its important role of coordination and assistance

in the critical period ahead. In addition to the essential humanitarian and reconstruction assistance being provided by United Nations agencies, UNAMI's support for the constitutional review process — as well as for the ongoing work concerning the disputed internal administrative boundaries and the status of Kirkuk — is of great importance.

With regard to Kirkuk in particular, Turkey strongly supports UNAMI's impartial and neutral role in promoting dialogue among the parties concerned and in helping to forge a consensus on that sensitive issue. Kirkuk, which is a microcosm of the rich ethnic diversity of Iraq, must not trigger new disputes and conflicts in Iraq.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm once again our strong support for the democratic transformation under way in Iraq. Obviously, we are still at an early stage of this long journey, the pace and final destination of which will be determined first and foremost by the Iraqis themselves. However, given the strategic importance of this whole endeavour, we must all be generous in extending our support and assistance. Turkey is more than ready and willing to do its share.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): I should like to begin by thanking Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for his informative and comprehensive briefing and express our appreciation for the ongoing effort and commitment that he and his team are investing in fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I would also like to thank Ambassador Hamid Al Bayati for his statement.

Iraq is becoming a free and fully democratic country. Croatia expresses its congratulations to the Government and the people of Iraq on the successful holding of provincial elections, the first Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned electoral process with the participation of citizens from all its communities. I would also like to pay tribute to UNAMI and its contribution to preparing and carrying out the elections, including with regard to the important issue of minority representation. In addition, we salute the serious, extensive and indispensable work done by Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission.

The peaceful provincial elections marked a crucial moment in the consolidation of Iraqi democracy. We hope that they will help to create new political momentum, which should be channelled into the national reconciliation process and economic development. Together with the major security gains that Iraq experienced last year, the results should now be collectively translated into lasting stability and tangible improvements that will be felt in the daily lives of ordinary Iraqis and will respond to the expectations and confidence expressed when the Iraqi people cast their votes. The atmosphere largely free of violence during the election period can be seen as the best testimony to the significant improvements in the security situation achieved over the past year. The Iraqi Government and the Iraqi Security Forces have demonstrated increasing capabilities and the ability to address security challenges.

The conclusion of the bilateral security agreement that led to the ending of the mandate of the multinational forces was another landmark achievement. We understand that the coming months will be testing and demanding for Iraqi forces. It is imperative that extremists not be allowed to undermine these gains or the public confidence hitherto achieved by continuing with sporadic and indiscriminate violence.

In the context of UNAMI's operations, it is important to ensure that the transfer of responsibilities results in no security gap for its facilities and personnel. As the Secretary-General's recent visit has unmistakably demonstrated, Iraq can count on the continuous support of the United Nations and the international community in this next crucial phase of locking in the democratic, security and economic progress made so far. We are glad to note that Iraq remains high on the United Nations list of priorities.

Croatia shares the conviction that the expansion and the increased activity of UNAMI have proved to be fully justified in view of the political and security gains witnessed compared to the previous year. It has proved to be a positive force in advancing national reconciliation, facilitating political consensus, engaging on the issues of minority representation and disputed internal boundaries, promoting regional dialogue, offering substantial electoral assistance, promoting human rights and supporting reconstruction and development. The recent establishment of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights, to name one example, is a tangible measure of its achievements.

As Iraq focuses on advancing the political process and socio-economic recovery, UNAMI has rightly identified federalism and hydrocarbon regulation as the priority issues to be addressed within the constitutional review process as requirements for long-term stability. Another priority challenge will be the issue of disputed internal boundaries and the status of Kirkuk.

On the recovery and development front, the International Compact for Iraq remains the blueprint for coherent international engagement. We are pleased to note a deepening United Nations engagement on humanitarian and development issues. Croatia continues to believe that dialogue and constructive engagement with Iraq's neighbours remains a critical component in the long-term stabilization of Iraq. We are encouraged by the trend of the reopening of embassies of regional countries in Baghdad and salute UNAMI's continued support for regional dialogue.

In closing, as the engagement of the United Nations is expanding and deepening, let me reiterate Croatia's full and continued support for the professional and committed efforts of Special Representative De Mistura and his team in their fulfilment of the mandate of UNAMI.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this debate. We also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing. We also wish to welcome the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

Iraqi provincial elections were successfully completed at the end of last month. That is a major milestone in the Iraqi peace and reconstruction process, and it is conducive to expanding the representativeness and inclusiveness of the Iraqi political process. It marks another significant step towards having Iraqis govern Iraq.

China wishes to congratulate the people and the Government of Iraq, and we appreciate the assistance of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in the electoral preparations. We hope that the Iraqi leaders in the various parties will seize the current positive momentum, put their national interest above all else and continue to promote impartial, open and inclusive dialogue so that the national reconciliation process can move steadily along the track of peace.

The improvement in the Iraqi security situation is encouraging. However, objectively speaking, the overall Iraqi situation still includes multiple challenges that do not make us overly optimistic. We welcome the strengthening of the capacity of the Iraqi security forces and we hope that the Iraqi security forces' capacity-building will be accelerated so that they can fully take over responsibility for the security of their country.

To consolidate the progress achieved by Iraq in the political and security fields, it is necessary to speed up the economic recovery and reconstruction process. We appeal to the international community to continue to help Iraq in its reconstruction and development, honour aid commitments and promote engagement with Iraq under the framework of the International Compact for Iraq. We encourage Iraq to expand its cooperation with neighbouring countries and give greater play to the role of mechanisms such as the meetings of Foreign Ministers of neighbouring countries.

Under the leadership of Mr. De Mistura, and pursuant to Security Council mandates, UNAMI has made good progress in promoting national dialogue and reconciliation and in the areas of electoral assistance, regional cooperation, humanitarian assistance and development and reconstruction. China highly appreciates its efforts in this regard.

We support a continued major role for the United Nations in the Iraqi political and reconstruction process, for which the international community should create an enabling environment. We trust that the Iraqi Government and the other parties concerned will honour their commitments in good faith and effectively ensure the safety and security of UNAMI personnel.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to thank the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Iraq and the work of the United Nations in that country (S/2009/102). I welcome the participation of Ambassador Al Bayati of Iraq and thank him for his statement.

During the reporting period, there have been many significant positive developments in the political, security and reconstruction fields in Iraq, including the overall low levels of violence and criminality, the improved capability of the Iraqi security forces, and the continued return of internally displaced persons and refugees. We are particularly heartened by the successful holding of provincial elections on 31 January 2009 in 14 out of Iraq's 18 governorates. We share the hope that Iraqi leaders will grasp this opportunity to build momentum towards national dialogue and reconciliation.

We are also encouraged by the steadily increasing international diplomatic presence in Iraq, particularly of regional countries, and the Iraqi cabinet's decision to allocate $25 million towards the construction of the UNAMI integrated headquarters in Baghdad, which we consider to be another indication of the country's enhanced self-confidence and strengthened international status.

However, we remain concerned about the serious challenges that Iraq continues to face. The rocket attack against the United Nations facility in the International Zone in November 2008, the disturbing acts of violence in the weeks prior to the provincial elections and the bloody attacks on Shia pilgrims in early January and mid-February 2009 are indications of a fragile situation. At the same time, the growing unemployment rate, the widening imbalances in social service delivery and the deteriorated living conditions of the most vulnerable groups — the vast majority of whom are women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons — are causes for concern. This situation may become even more serious in the context of the international financial crisis and the fluctuations in the price of oil.

Now that the governorate council elections have been successfully organized, the months ahead will be crucial for Iraq to consolidate the progress made and lay solid foundations for long-term gains. To this end, the quest for durable peace and security in Iraq should be a nationally-led process, which requires a harmonious combination of various parameters and united efforts. Throughout this process, the promotion of dialogue and national reconciliation across political, ethnic and sectarian lines continues to play a defining role. For progress in the security and political fields to take root, economic and social reconstruction must move ahead. We call on all parties in Iraq to put aside their partisan interests and jointly take on a national agenda towards the achievement of national unity, development and prosperity.

We commend the efforts undertaken by United Nations staff in assisting the Iraqi Government in strengthening institutions for local governorates, advancing political dialogue and confidence building, resolving the status of Kirkuk and other disputed internal boundaries, extending electoral assistance, supporting the constitutional review process and facilitating regional dialogue in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1770 (2007) and 1830 (2008). Together with the extension of UNAMI's provincial outreach and the establishment of permanent presences in Iraq by other United Nations agencies, these efforts contribute to the strengthening of the United Nations role in the development of a stable, secure and prosperous Iraq as enshrined in the United Nations Iraq Assistance Strategy 2008-2010.

At the same time, Iraq's constructive engagement with regional countries and the international community is critical to the country's long-term stabilization and reconstruction. We welcome Iraq's participation in such broad frameworks as the International Compact with Iraq, the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, the Paris Declaration principles, the expanded ministerial meetings, as well as the regional working groups on energy, refugees and security. We support and look forward to contributing to the promotion of collective efforts to assist Iraq in each of its respective phases of development.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and by thanking Special Representative De Mistura for having introduced the report (S/2009/102). In addition, we express our gratitude to all the staff of UNAMI who are successfully carrying out their duties under the extremely difficult conditions in Iraq today.

We are grateful to the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Mr. Al Bayati, for his detailed account of the achievements of the Government and people of Iraq and of the difficult problems that they are currently working to resolve.

There is no doubt that progress is being made in Iraq, but it is premature to give way to euphoria. We share the views expressed in the report to the effect that the situation in Iraq has recently been developing in a positive direction. The situation has improved in the security sphere. The Iraqi Security Forces have been strengthened. The Al-Maliki Government has consolidated its presence in the provinces.

It is gratifying that, in the assessment of UNAMI, the provincial council elections of 31 January took place without serious disruptions. In our view, the very fact that it was possible to hold such competitive elections must be hailed as a positive development. It is important that a growing number of representatives of Iraq's various political, ethnic and religious groups participated in the elections. The voting in the governorates marks a substantive element of progress in Iraq, specifically in terms of the overall political process and the achievement of national accord, which Russia has always promoted as a means of bringing about a reliable and long-term political settlement in Iraq. However, some problems did arise, including low voter turnout, which, in Baghdad, reached barely 40 per cent. This speaks to the fact that virtually half of the population has not yet taken civic ownership of key issues in the life of the country and in the prospects for the development of Iraq. Furthermore, important segments of the Iraqi population, such as refugees and displaced persons, were not able to participate and remained beyond the margins of the electoral campaign.

The report notes that the terrorist underground continues to have substantial potential in Iraq. A significant segment of Iraqi society rejects the presence of foreign forces in the country, even when such forces are governed by specific rules and limited in time by the status-of-forces agreement. In that regard, we await the popular referendum on the security agreement to be held by 31 July 2009, which should formalize the attitude of the Iraqis to such agreements once and for all.

Other major and potentially explosive problems include those described in detail in the report: human rights violations, violence perpetrated by national law enforcement personnel and the situation in prisons and detention centres. The failure to settle these problems is creating fertile ground for new outbursts of strife among various groups and for the activity of terrorists. We believe that the Government of Iraq will be able to overcome these existing difficulties by working in close cooperation with UNAMI. The establishment of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights was an important step to that end.

Several other questions must also be resolved, including the delineation of the competencies between the federal centre and the regions; the establishment of autonomous regions, concerning which there is a lively ongoing discussion in Iraqi society; the definition of administrative borders, including of Kirkuk; and the adoption into the Constitution of previously agreed changes that expand the potential for participation in managing the country by representatives of all of the communities living there. Finalizing these complex objectives, which will determine the future of Iraq, requires compromises and, most important, genuine dialogue that could yield the appropriate solutions to achieve national harmony and to preserve unity and the territorial integrity of Iraq. We wish the Government and people of Iraq every success in doing so.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura, and the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Ambassador Al Bayati, for their statements.

Like previous speakers, we are happy to see that the security environment has made it possible to carry out a successful electoral process, marked by an encouraging level of voter participation and by the absence — or by only a very small number — of incidents. In this respect, my delegation commends the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in particular the work it undertook jointly with the Independent High Electoral Commission to ensure the participation of Iraqi citizens. This undoubtedly constitutes the best of its recent achievements. My delegation trusts in the success of subsequent processes to broaden the legitimacy of the Government, further promote reconciliation and strengthen the legitimacy of institutions.

My delegation welcomes the improvement in the economic situation. In this context, we believe that the financial support that Iraq is receiving should be provided in a framework that enables supervision of internal investment and promotes private enterprise at the local level. In this respect, we see the implementation of the private sector development programme under the recently signed United Nations Iraq Assistance Strategy as a positive development.

Of course, we support the proposal contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/102) that the support of the international community be systematically focused on those areas in which humanitarian and development indicators register the greatest disadvantage. In our view, one area of priority should be combating food insecurity in the southern part of the country.

All efforts at reconciliation must be accompanied by efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, of which the system of the administration of justice is without doubt a component of fundamental importance. Capacity-building in the judicial sector is a priority area that requires the support of an institutional framework of cooperation with other institutions competent in this area.

My delegation is concerned about the persistence of human rights violations. Independent of their statistical significance, we urge that the necessary action be taken to reduce the number of so-called honour crimes. We recognize the positive steps taken in the field of human rights, in particular the establishment of the Independent Commission, which we hope will serve as an instrument for the protection and promotion of such rights.

In conclusion, I congratulate Iraq on its progress not only towards reconciliation and institutional capacity-building, but also in normalizing its relations with its neighbours; on the growing international recognition of its efforts to normalize its national situation; and on its efforts to improve the well-being of the Iraqi people.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/102) and Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and his staff for their exceptional service and performance every day in Iraq.

I also want to thank Ambassador Al Bayati of Iraq for his important remarks and to congratulate his Government and the people of Iraq on the important and positive progress that they have achieved of late.

With our shared strategic interests at stake, thousands of brave Americans in harm's way, and the future of millions of Iraqis in the balance, Iraq remains an issue of great importance to the United States, but one on which the new Administration will steer a new course. The American and coalition troops, the international diplomatic corps, aid workers and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), who are all focused on building a future of peace, security and stability in Iraq, have performed magnificently, and we salute their accomplishments and sacrifices.

Iraqi and American interests alike will best be served by the safe and responsible redeployment of United States forces from Iraq, by support for Iraqis as they assume full responsibility for their sovereign nation, and by the encouragement of other nations to join in helping to stabilize the region and to deploy a broader array of tools to eliminate the ongoing threat of Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorism.

With the end of the coalition's mandate on 31 December, we marked a new beginning with Iraq as a friend and a partner working to establish open and democratic rule and to advance peace and cooperation with its neighbours and the wider world. Even so, a sovereign Iraq continues to look to the international community for support in these areas, and we encourage Member States to help Iraq to strengthen its democratic institutions, bring its displaced citizens back home, strengthen its democracy and respect for the rule of law, and deepen its productive relations with all of its neighbours even as it works to continue to strengthen and build its economy.

The United States will never forget the enormous price this institution paid in Iraq. We will always honour the ultimate sacrifice made by Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues, who gave their lives in the attempt to build a new Iraq and who dedicated themselves throughout their careers to the fight for a more peaceful, lawful and decent world.

We salute the critically important role that the United Nations continues to play in Iraq. Under the leadership of Special Representative De Mistura and at the invitation of the Iraqi Government, UNAMI has expanded and enhanced its presence in Iraq. Its work is as far-ranging as it is important — advancing national reconciliation, helping to resolve disputes over internal boundaries, ensuring that Iraqi elections are free and fair, and helping those, including refugees and the internally displaced, whose lives have been upended by the turmoil of war. On behalf of the United States, I am proud to offer our full support to UNAMI's work. The United States is grateful to Special Representative

De Mistura and his staff for their accomplishments and resolve.

Let me spend a few moments on one development in which UNAMI's efforts have been particularly helpful. Iraq, as we have just been discussing, recently held provincial elections in which the nation's voters chose new councils in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces. That free and peaceful vote, with its widely respected legitimacy, was a heartening moment in the evolution of Iraqi democracy. Voter participation was high, candidates from all of Iraq's major parties and communities ran hard, and the elections were unmarred by boycotts, significant violence or major disruptions. The Independent High Electoral Commission rose to the challenge here, and UNAMI played an important supporting role, providing technical assistance and advice rooted in long United Nations experience.

We most importantly congratulate the Government and people of Iraq, who deserve the greatest credit for this stirring demonstration of peaceful political change. I was personally moved by the sight of the Iraqi police officers who helped to secure the polling places and to protect ordinary voters determined to cast their ballots. We hope that, with the help of UNAMI and the international community, Iraqis will be similarly encouraged by the national elections that are to be held later this year.

I would like to draw particular attention today to an area in which more work and a greater sense of urgency are required from all of us: the plight of millions of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons, who constitute one of the largest refugee populations in the world today. Iraqi refugees face increasingly difficult circumstances in their host countries: rising food prices, rents they can no longer meet, and dwindling personal resources. All these conditions have heightened the spectre of poverty and despair.

Thus, even as we commend host countries for their generosity, we urge the international community to intensify its efforts to take in the desperate and the vulnerable; to ensure that non-governmental organizations, host countries and others can provide dignified lives and sheltering havens to those already in their care; to help the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and the World Food Programme to provide additional aid to the needy; and to help the Government of Iraq to develop the capacities and conditions that will let those uprooted by war return home in peace.

The United States will support Iraq's continuing development as a democratic country in which all communities can join in shaping the political, social and economic life of a nation that protects the human and civil rights of all of its citizens — a nation that lives in peace with its neighbours and the international community. The United States will move responsibly and safely to reduce our military presence in Iraq. Our bilateral security agreement with Iraq will frame the path ahead, and the process of redeploying our combat troops will be conducted in consultation with the Government of Iraq and with its support.

This carefully managed commitment to ending the war in no way diminishes the United States long-term support for a sovereign, stable, democratic and prosperous Iraq that is a force for peace in a turbulent region. Indeed, we have already signed a broad agreement with Iraq that sets out a long-term programme for cooperation in fields ranging from education to trade, technology and common efforts to meet the energy challenges of the new century. The United States and the Government of Iraq are already working to establish a strong foundation for future cooperation and an ongoing partnership that benefits both of our free and sovereign peoples and the region.

Our approach to Iraq must indeed also be understood in a larger regional context. The responsible draw-down of United States forces in Iraq will give us additional flexibility in Afghanistan. At the same time, the United States will vigorously pursue a comprehensive strategy in the Middle East. That strategy will address the security needs of Israel and the legitimate political and economic aspirations of the Palestinian people. It will seek an end to Iran's ambition to acquire an illicit nuclear capacity and its support for terrorism. It will aim to encourage both Iran and Syria to become constructive regional actors, and it will deepen our ties with our partners in the region to pursue common efforts to secure a broad and sustained peace.

This is a new course, but it is the right one for the future of Iraq, for the stability of the region and, ultimately, for our shared security and well-being.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity, as representative of Japan.

I would like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his very helpful report. Japan wholeheartedly supports and backs the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I express profound gratitude to all the staff of UNAMI, who work under difficult conditions. We express our sincere condolences to the families of staff members who have lost their lives in a noble mission.

I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Al Bayati on his very important statement and on the progress that the Iraqi Government and people are making.

Japan is pleased with the positive developments during the reporting period, most notably the successful governorate elections in January. Our election observers who participated in the process reported the high regard in which they held the professional work of the Independent High Electoral Commission and the generally smooth conduct of the voting. I am grateful for the kind words regarding the Japanese contribution.

Only a representative and inclusive electoral process will carry the legitimacy necessary to gain the support of the people. The result of the elections will require political parties to work with each other to select their officers. Japan hopes that the success of the governorate elections augurs well for the future democratic process. We hope for an even higher turnout in the next stages — the national election and the remaining governorate elections — with the collaboration of the Independent High Electoral Commission and UNAMI.

Improvement in security is vital to the development of the country. The positive progress in the security situation during the last quarter is encouraging. We welcome the growing role of the Iraqi security forces. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the United States, the United Kingdom and other coalition countries that are providing security support. However, there are still disturbing incidents, and we condemn all acts of violence.

Together with security, we should concentrate on rehabilitation, reconstruction and development to improve the living standards of all the Iraqi people. Japan has extended $1.6 billion in grant aid for immediate needs in such areas as supply of electricity and medical services. In addition to $6 billion in debt relief measures, Japan has pledged additional support of $3.5 billion for the rehabilitation of large-scale infrastructure. Already, 12 strategically important projects, for a total amount of $2.5 billion, have been agreed. The remaining $1 billion will place more focus on development in the central and western regions.

However, there are still significant challenges that remain to be tackled by the Iraqi people. First and foremost, Iraq needs to achieve economic growth and improve basic social services, which must be available to all the Iraqi people, including displaced persons. This has become a real challenge with the sharp decline of oil prices. While the international community, including Japan, is ready to support Iraq, the Government of Iraq is expected to address the undertakings it made in the International Compact for Iraq. We are confident that, with appropriate technical support, Iraq will soon become a vibrant economy that can reap the benefits of peace.

Other challenges include the disputed internal boundaries, the constitutional review and national elections. The issue of the status of Kirkuk will soon come to the forefront. I hope that the Iraqi people will be able to find an equitable solution to this issue with the assistance of UNAMI. Political issues can be solved only through the political process. Resorting to violence to achieve political gains is totally unacceptable.

Another important issue is how to normalize Iraq's relationship with the rest of us in the international community and to achieve international standing equal to that which it held prior to the adoption of resolution 661 (1990). We very much look forward to the Secretary-General's report in response to resolution 1859 (2008).

We welcome the positive interaction of the Government of Iraq with its neighbours. We strongly call on the Government, as a responsible partner, to work constructively with neighbouring countries and the international community to work out solutions on all outstanding issues.

As we recognize the gains achieved so far, we note that 2009 will be an important year for the future of Iraq. I would like to conclude by reiterating Japan's strong support for the Government and the people of Iraq.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to Mr. De Mistura to respond to comments made by members of the Council.

Mr. De Mistura: I will say just a few words, simply to acknowledge the many positive, constructive comments and the advice offered by each member of the Security Council. We look forward to continuing to report progress. There will be ups and downs: we know it. But what we heard today will encourage both Ambassador Al Bayati and me to continue on this road.

The President: I thank Mr. De Mistura for his comments. I look forward to his continuing to do a good job, along with his staff.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6088

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6088th meeting

Friday, 27 February 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Takasu	(Japan)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-25140 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend the warmest possible welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis and invite her to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in the course of its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece. I now have the honour to give her the floor.

Ms. Bakoyannis: It is a pleasure and an honour to speak before the Security Council. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the largest and most inclusive regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. When times are as challenging as they are, close cooperation between the Security Council and a key regional player such as the OSCE becomes all the more indispensable. In my statement today, I will outline the priorities of the Greek OSCE chairmanship for 2009 and address some of the key issues common to the agendas of both of our organizations.

Our first priority is to strengthen the OSCE in the field. Unfortunately, 2008 saw a serious crisis in the Caucasus. The crisis in Georgia is a reminder that we must do more to translate the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act into durable reality on the ground.

We have devoted great attention to ongoing discussions on the future OSCE presence in Georgia. In the absence of a consensus, the OSCE Mission to Georgia has found itself since 1 January in a phase of technical closure. Our position is clear: the OSCE should do more in Georgia, and not less, and the Greek chairmanship intends to play an active role to that end, as an honest broker. The OSCE's experience, its diverse toolbox and its comprehensive approach to security are unparalleled assets.

On 12 February, OSCE participating States extended the military monitoring activities of the Mission until 30 June. We also followed closely the agreement on the extension, until 15 June, of the United Nations Mission in Abkhazia. I see both decisions as recognition of the need for the United Nations and the OSCE on the ground. Much more is needed.

The Greek OSCE chairmanship will continue consultations on a more comprehensive OSCE presence in Georgia. In the meantime, we are committed to the Geneva framework, which is co-chaired by the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union (EU). The Geneva platform demonstrates the importance of cooperation between these three major actors. This is the only framework where all the parties to the conflict meet. Despite steep challenges, we are making progress. Last week, agreement was reached in Geneva on mechanisms for incident management. This is a vital first step towards confidence-building and eventual conflict-settlement. We must now make these mechanisms work in practice.

Humanitarian issues in the region remain a major focus for the OSCE. To illustrate, the Organization was asked to address the disruption in the delivery of gas to South Ossetia. The OSCE assisted both sides in identifying the cause for the disruption and taking corrective measures. On 25 January, gas deliveries resumed. The Greek chairmanship is equally dedicated to resolving the disruption in the supply of water in the region, and also to addressing the issue of detainees and missing persons at the request of the parties.

While the situation in Georgia has drawn much of our attention, it is not the only common challenge we face. The situation in Kosovo and the restructuring of

the international presence there is also high on the OSCE agenda. We welcome the endorsement by the Security Council of the Secretary-General's report of 24 November 2008 (S/2008/692), which underscored the importance of the OSCE's role in building and monitoring Kosovo's institutions and in supporting its minority communities. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo will continue to implement its mandate based on resolution 1244 (1999).

My recent visit to Pristina strengthened my conviction that the OSCE Mission remains a stabilizing factor in Kosovo, ensuring the continuity of the international presence and maintaining good working relationships with all communities. May I also underline here the excellent cooperation that our Mission enjoys with the rest of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and in particular with Special Representative Lamberto Zannier.

The Greek OSCE chairmanship is dedicated also to taking the OSCE further in the field of border security and policing. In this respect, deepening the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan will remain a priority in 2009 and beyond. Afghanistan has been an OSCE partner for cooperation since 2003. I should say that it is a special partner that has expressed an interest in practical cooperation to address concrete problems. In this respect, a multi-million-euro package of assistance and capacity-building projects was prepared, in consultation with the Afghan authorities as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other international actors. Most of those projects are entering the operational phase. As a result, the OSCE will provide training, including through our field operations in Central Asia, to Afghan experts on issues such as border management and security, border patrolling, counter-narcotics policing, customs management and travel-document security.

In addition, the OSCE has been working closely with Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission, in consultation with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme. Our Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has been providing targeted assistance to the Commission's efforts in election observation and other election-related issues, following up on recommendations made as a result of OSCE election support missions to Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005.

I am convinced that the OSCE, with its expertise in police training and border management and its long experience in Central Asia, can make a meaningful contribution to the security of Afghanistan and its neighbourhood. We should stand ready to consider further assistance to the country, as required, while recognizing the coordinating role of the United Nations.

Other new avenues of OSCE-United Nations cooperation have also opened up in Central Asia. For instance, I believe that the OSCE's long experience on the ground can be of benefit to the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

The priorities of the Greek chairmanship span the three OSCE dimensions. The OSCE will continue to play a key role in the fight against terrorism. The thrust of the OSCE's anti-terrorism work aims to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). The ratification of universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols is of special importance, as is our work to enhance legal cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism, to counter the financing of terrorism and to improve travel-document security.

Cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is intensive, as is our collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The OSCE will continue to support the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

This year, the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, which will take place in Athens, will examine cross-dimensional aspects of the migration phenomenon. Uncontrolled migratory movements represent a significant challenge to OSCE participating States. I believe that there is great potential for cooperation with the United Nations in that important field.

The OSCE should also play a role in helping to address the long-term threat of climate change. We will initiate a multilevel dialogue on this issue, aimed at underpinning the work of the United Nations.

The start of this year highlighted the challenge of ensuring the security of energy supplies. The 2003 OSCE strategy document for the economic and environmental dimension can provide a starting point to initiate a working-level dialogue that includes energy producers, consumers and transit countries.

In the human dimension, the Greek chairmanship will seek to strengthen the broad thematic area of the rule of law. Gender equality is also a priority. Dialogue and exchange of experience with the United Nations system will be particularly beneficial in this area. The Greek chairmanship will devote attention to the situation of the Roma and Sinti and to the fight against hate crimes. Freedom of religion and human rights education will also be given prominence.

Greece is also determined to maintain the highest standards for OSCE election observation activities. This year will see important elections throughout the OSCE region. Election observation must remain a flagship activity of the Organization.

Finally, let me draw the Council's attention to the adoption by the Helsinki Ministerial Council of a declaration on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The participating States reaffirmed their strong commitment to the declaration and recommitted themselves to act in conformity with its purposes and principles.

The OSCE was designed as an inclusive forum for political and security dialogue. It should be no surprise that the first high-level multilateral discussion of the proposals by President Medvedev and others for a renewed European security dialogue took place within the OSCE, during the Helsinki Ministerial Council. Those exchanges confirmed the OSCE as a unique platform. Its inclusive composition and signature concept of comprehensive security remain unparalleled across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian landscapes. OSCE participating States are currently discussing how to take this process forward. Certainly, OSCE experience is flexible and can be drawn on in many different ways. Greece stands ready to organize meetings at any level to facilitate further dialogue.

Times are not easy for our States or for our societies. The global economic crisis casts a long shadow and will affect us in ways that are still unpredictable. In such circumstances, it is our responsibility to consolidate the pillars of a rules-based international order. It is vital to strengthen further the partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations across the three dimensions and in all the regions where we operate. This will be consistently on the agenda of the OSCE Greek chairmanship in 2009.

The President: I thank Ms. Bakoyannis for her very important briefing.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): May I be the first to thank Minister Bakoyannis for her full briefing today and for taking the trouble to come to us and for setting out the priorities of the Greek Chairperson-in-Office throughout 2009. She is welcome with the Council here today.

As one of a number of countries around the table which was a founding member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and before that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, we hold the work of the OSCE in very high regard and importance, both in terms of the security work that the OSCE does and the human dimension, including through the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, that the Minister has set out for the Council.

We have also seen the OSCE play a very valuable operational role across the Balkans. It continues to play a very important role in Kosovo, less so these days in Bosnia but still an important role in the Balkan region, and we are encouraged by the growing cooperation of the OSCE in Afghanistan, where support for elections and other issues in which the OSCE is involved is very welcome.

The Minister mentioned Georgia as a priority for the OSCE at the moment. The United Kingdom welcomes the agreement that the Chairperson-in-Office secured to extend the presence of the 20 additional military monitors until June. Obviously, our goal is to find a basis for renewing the mission's mandate that will allow access throughout the areas of concern, including inside South Ossetia. We welcome the Chairperson-in-Office's efforts to find a compromise based on OSCE principles and we encourage all the participating States to cooperate in that process.

We also believe that there is an important role for the OSCE in what has been called the unresolved conflicts — in Nagorny-Karabakh and Moldova-Transdniestria — and the idea of the Chairperson-in-Office to appoint a special representative for them is helpful. If we could entice the Chairperson-in-Office to say a few more words at the end of this discussion about the prospects in those two regions, I think that would be helpful. I apologize if I am not here to listen to the answers, but my delegation will certainly be interested in them.

The Chairperson-in-Office mentioned Russian ideas to enhance European security. We are studying

those carefully. My minister made clear at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in December that we are open to further discussions. The security relationship between Russia and Europe is very important to us all. We look to further information and analysis from our Russian friends as to why a new treaty is needed to enhance security. We do not exclude that, but we are studying the idea and are willing to consider participating in a high-level meeting once there has been fuller discussion and preparation on that issue.

May I close just by saying that we are fortunate in Europe to have strong multilateral institutions. The OSCE is a crucial member of that grouping, together with NATO, the European Union and other trans-European institutions, and they help provide real security on our continent. It is vital that we consider all the elements of our security as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and in subsequent OSCE commitments. They include human rights, good governance and the rule of law as the fundamental elements of European security.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to welcome the presence in the Council of Ms. Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece. I thank her for her thorough briefing and assure her that France shares her vision for a strengthened OSCE.

European security has been heavily challenged during the past year. In the summer of 2008, the war in Georgia marked the beginning of a conflict between two member States of the OSCE, and the gas crisis of this winter led to a further sense of insecurity throughout the continent. But the days of the cold war have passed. The current reality is no longer one of two blocs opposing each other. Europe and Russia have changed and together we must build a safe space. For that reason, France believes it is essential to restore trust and to reflect together on questions of security in Europe.

In the summer of 2008, President Medvedev made proposals for European security. President Sarkozy set out the position of France on several occasions. He provided the most comprehensive elaboration of that position in his statement at the Evian conference on 8 October 2008, and at the Munich conference on security on 7 February he reiterated that France is prepared to participate in a discussion of those issues and will support the efforts of the OSCE Greek chairmanship in pursuing a high-level dialogue along those lines.

Any discussion on renewing and improving security in Europe must be carried out in full respect for the principles on which security in Europe is based: the transatlantic connection, the preservation of existing institutions; a broad concept of security, including its political, military, human and environmental dimensions; and respect for the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris of 1990. The OSCE, in the framework of its three baskets, is the appropriate forum for carrying out such discussions, which must be an opportunity to reaffirm our common interests as outlined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, in particular respect for territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the non-use of force and the right to freely choose security arrangements and alliances.

Preserving and renewing conventional arms control instruments is an indispensable element of the discussion. The conventional forces regime in Europe is in fact the cornerstone of security in Europe; restoring its viability is therefore essential. Moreover, resolving the remaining conflicts in Europe, in Transdniestria and Nagorny-Karabakh, and the continuation of the process in Geneva on Georgia will certainly facilitate the discussion. In that context, I reiterate our conviction that the OSCE must continue to play an important role in Georgia, including with regard to conflicts.

France is committed to the OSCE. It is the only organization within which all the countries of Europe and Central Asia, as well as the United States and Canada, can carry out a dialogue. It is a unique model of cooperation based on the conviction that Europe's security goes hand in hand with the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The OSCE has helped to strengthen international stability and security, in particular by making it possible to build a foundation of shared values.

It is within that comprehensive concept of security and cooperation that the OSCE finds its full value. In that regard, I welcome the essential role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, particularly in the area of election monitoring. Its autonomy is its strength and must be preserved.

Finally, the OSCE must work in close coordination with other international and regional organizations. In that connection, the presence of the Greek chairmanship in the Security Council is a demonstration of the vitality of the cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations, and we welcome it.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): I would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece for coming to the Council to present an informative and comprehensive briefing. I welcome her.

The priorities identified by Greece for its chairmanship-in-office are indeed important and pertinent. In the current security environment, in which we are increasingly faced with various threats and risks, the need for a multidimensional approach to security is evident. In that respect, the comprehensive concept of security of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) responds effectively to that need.

As the largest regional security organization in the Eurasian-Atlantic space, the OSCE brings much added value to our common quest for international peace and stability. The activities of the OSCE, as a regional organization cooperating closely with the United Nations system, complement those of the United Nations. The fact that their security agendas overlap necessitates cooperation between the two organizations. The OSCE has been making important contributions to the efforts of the United Nations, and we strongly support the continuation of that close cooperation.

That having been said, one of the pressing issues that require close cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE is the situation in Georgia. We very much hope that the parallel efforts of the two organizations will contribute concretely to the resolution of that important issue.

The OSCE can continue to have a unique and exclusive role to play in the European security dialogue. In that respect, we need to carry out our commitments, effectively implement the existing mechanisms and, wherever needed, overcome deficiencies. At a time when difficult security issues are starting to prevail in the European agenda, it is the duty of the OSCE to make the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe relevant and responsive to the current requirements.

We wish Minister Bakoyannis every success in tackling the priorities that she has set. I assure her that she can count on our assistance and cooperation in discharging her important duties.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I, too, would like to welcome Minister Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to the Council today. I would like to thank her for her overview of the priorities of the OSCE under Greece's leadership. As a member of the OSCE, the United States appreciates the creative and assertive role that she has taken upon assuming the chairmanship.

The strengthened effectiveness of the OSCE comes from its comprehensive definition of security, which encompasses human, economic, military and political dimensions. In that regard, we acknowledge the full range of OSCE activities, including the important role played by the OSCE in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts in South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

We also acknowledge the important role that the OSCE has played in building strong democratic institutions, which form the backbone of security in the OSCE region. That work includes the strengthening of the rule of law through border management projects, the development of legislative transparency, assistance in the reform of criminal justice systems and the provision of election-related assistance.

The United Nations and the OSCE already enjoy fruitful cooperation in a number of areas. The United States welcomes opportunities to broaden United Nations-OSCE cooperation and dialogue. The Chairperson-in-Office has described OSCE efforts in Central Asia, particularly with regard to border management projects. We believe that there may be opportunities to strengthen United Nations-OSCE efforts in that area.

We welcome the OSCE's work in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan has requested OSCE technical assistance to fulfil unmet border security needs. We hope that the OSCE will be able to implement fully and expeditiously two critical border security projects planned for Afghanistan.

The Chairperson has also noted OSCE work in elections in Afghanistan, and we might consider how the OSCE, in close consultation with the United

Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, could play a role in the upcoming presidential elections in that country.

United Nations-OSCE cooperation has been very effective when both organizations have had missions in the field. The OSCE's efforts in Kosovo merit special attention. Kosovo continues to prosper since its declaration of independence last year. The OSCE, working with the United Nations, has played a pivotal role in Kosovo's development through capacity-building, elections assistance and support for minority communities. We hope that the OSCE's important work in Kosovo will continue as Kosovo continues to strengthen its democratic institutions and as the European Union assumes a greater role.

In Georgia, there is a need for close coordination and cooperation among all international organizations in order to promote security and stability there. Despite a diminished presence and persistent challenges in effectively carrying out its mandate, the OSCE mission is a component crucial to the establishment of a durable and lasting resolution to the conflict in Georgia. We believe that, in order to properly address key security and humanitarian concerns on the ground, the current OSCE presence in Georgia must, however, be bolstered with additional military monitors empowered to patrol and investigate incidents throughout Georgia, including the South Ossetia region of Georgia. We strongly commend the efforts of the Chairperson-in-Office to find a compromise approach that would create a framework for the OSCE to continue its important work in Georgia.

Finally, we support the co-chairs of the Geneva discussions — the OSCE, the United Nations and the European Union — in calling for another round of talks to discuss urgent security issues, including the non-use of force, in March or April. The security situation in Georgia remains unstable, so we must not delay.

Again, I would like to thank Minister Bakoyannis for all her efforts and offer her the full support of the United States.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative of organizing this debate. I would also like to thank Minister Bakoyannis for briefing us on the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Her presence here today is a sign of the vital cooperation between our two organizations, and I do not have to tell her that we, as a seat of the organization and a participating State, fully share the priorities she just outlined. We can assure her of our full support in her efforts to promote the agenda of the OSCE.

The cooperation of the United Nations — and of the Security Council in particular — with regional and subregional organizations under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter remains an important asset for the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that this cooperation must be mutually reinforcing and complementary.

Over the years, the OSCE has also played an active role by supporting the implementation of United Nations principles with regard to various horizontal issues — which the Chairperson mentioned — such as counter-terrorism, small arms and light weapons, and trafficking in human beings. We welcome her emphasis on the rule of law and gender equality, with a particular focus on women and security and violence against women. Both issues are interlinked and mutually reinforcing with human rights and democracy.

We fully support the Chairperson's determination to promote the peaceful resolution of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. Any sign of progress in resolving them will be a strong impetus for renewing trust and bolstering dialogue.

An example of the complementarity of the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union is the recent crisis management in Georgia. We therefore support the common efforts to find a lasting solution that will guarantee stability and security in Georgia. Any solution to the crisis in Georgia must serve the aim of achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region and — as we have repeatedly said — has to be firmly grounded on the principles of international law, fully respecting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We congratulate the Chairperson on the agreement reached on extending the mandate of the OSCE military observer mission. At the same time, however, we would also like to see a greater OSCE presence in Georgia. We fully support her attempt to resolve the question of a comprehensive OSCE presence in the whole of Georgia which would also allow international monitors access to the region of South Ossetia. In parallel, we support the ongoing talks in Geneva co-chaired by the United Nations, the OSCE

and the European Union. We are encouraged by the recent agreement on the joint incident prevention and response mechanisms and hope that this will lead to further tangible results in the near future.

As we and others have said, the OSCE continues to play a crucial role in Kosovo; its work there under Ambassador Almhofer has our full support. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo fulfils an important role in guaranteeing a democratic and multi-ethnic future for Kosovo, in particular in building and monitoring Kosovo's democratic institutions and in its support for human rights and the preservation of minority rights.

Stability in the Balkans is a goal that the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE share. We welcome the complementary and mutually reinforcing efforts carried out with other organizations on the ground, in particular with the European Union. We are looking forward to continued OSCE engagement there.

We also fully support Foreign Minister Bakoyannis's commitment to carrying forward the ongoing debate on the future of security in Europe. The OSCE is the right forum for that debate. For us, it is crucial to bear in mind the comprehensive security approach developed over the years by the OSCE and to focus on how we can further sharpen existing instruments and confidence- and security-building mechanisms. As a practical contribution to the efforts of the Chairperson-in-Office and to further stimulate the debate, Austria plans to invite security policy experts from think tanks and international organizations to a brainstorming meeting in Vienna on 8 May. We hope that this will also reinforce the synergies among Vienna-based organizations.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): I should like to join others in warmly welcoming to this Chamber Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece and the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2009.

My delegation thanks the Foreign Minister for her informative briefing, which serves as further proof that our collective security and defence mechanisms need to be not only maintained but further strengthened and invigorated if we are to successfully address the challenges facing us.

The tools and expertise of the OSCE have been effectively utilized by many Central and Eastern European States, as well as States in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The OSCE's unique role, based on its comprehensive security definition that includes military, political and economic dimensions, is based firmly on transatlantic cooperation and on the OSCE's well-known democratic credentials. Furthermore, the OSCE's economic and environmental dimensions is again becoming increasingly relevant to us, due not only to the important topic of climate change but also to the various and visible problems of energy delivery that were felt once more this winter in Europe. The comprehensive approach that the OSCE takes is clearly the logical one to pursue, as we are reminded at this moment by the dark clouds of global recession.

As a participating State of the organization, Croatia sees and supports the OSCE's beneficial role in the further democratization of its entire area, as well as the benefit it brings to the people caught in conflict in its area, in Kosovo and in Georgia. We echo the words of the Foreign Minister and encourage the OSCE to export its rich expertise to Afghanistan and to cooperate with other international organizations, including the United Nations and its missions.

We also see the issues of terrorism, cross-border migration and climate change as other areas in which United Nations-OSCE cooperation could be further strengthened. In tackling these issues, the resources and experience of both organizations should be pooled in order to help ensure the greatest degree of success.

We thank Her Excellency once again for her statement and wish Greece a successful and efficient chairmanship.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece and to thank her for her update on the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and on the priorities that organization will pursue under the chairmanship of Greece. We wish Greece every success in conducting the affairs of the OSCE in the coming months.

What I have to say in no way belittles the importance and value of the briefing just made by the Foreign Minister of Greece. However, I would like to put on the record that this is the second time that we have heard a representative of the OSCE in an official meeting in the course of four months.

The OSCE, as we all know, is a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, as mentioned by the Minister. In that respect, it is no different from a number of other regional organizations. Yet in the course of this month the Council refused to respond to requests by two other regional organizations, the League of Arab States and the African Union, to make their voices heard before the Council. After prolonged discussion, and after insistence by some members of the Council, we were able to hear representatives of those two organizations in informal meetings, of which no record exists.

My delegation — and I believe that my colleagues from Burkina Faso and Uganda share this view — would therefore like to put on record our hope that the Council's double standard in dealing with regional organizations will come to an end. We also hope that in the future the Council will be prepared to hear all regional organizations in official meetings — in particular those organizations that are inextricably linked with the United Nations in the field of the maintenance of international peace and security, such as the African Union.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are gratified to welcome Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); we are grateful for her briefing.

The Russian Federation has consistently championed the multilateral development and stepping up of cooperation between the United Nations and the Security Council and regional and subregional mechanisms. This cooperation should be based on the sound foundation of the Charter of the United Nations, including its Chapter VIII, with due attention paid to the comparative advantages of this universal Organization and of those mechanisms. What must not be forgotten here is respect for the fact that the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Such interaction would bolster the collective potential of the international community to confront crises.

As a regional mechanism, the OSCE has on the whole established fruitful cooperation with the United Nations in a number of key areas. Here I am referring first and foremost to security and the settlement of regional conflicts. Unfortunately, however, in the context of the August events referred to by Ms. Bakoyannis, the OSCE clearly did not fulfil its role or live up to its responsibility as an important instrument for ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic region. It was not able either to prevent the Georgian attack on South Ossetia or to appropriately assess the actions of the Saakashvili regime. The information from the OSCE military observers in the former Georgian South Ossetia conflict zone on the preparation and launching of the aggression by Tbilisi on South Ossetia was not brought to the attention of all the OSCE participating States or its collective decision-making bodies. That only became known much later from an interview given to Western media by former personnel of the OSCE mission to Georgia.

Let us be candid. The lack of the aforementioned key information from OSCE military observers had a negative effect on the Security Council's consideration of the situation that emerged as a result of Georgian aggression against South Ossetia. That is far from the best possible example of cooperation between the two organizations. We cherish the hope that the necessary lessons will be learnt by our partners of this pan-European organization.

The mandate of the OSCE mission in Georgia, which is no longer in step with reality, expired on 31 December 2008. From 1 January, the mission started to wind up its activities. The Russian Federation is ready to back an extension of the OSCE's field activity both in Georgia and in South Ossetia, taking into account the new political and legal realities in the region with the establishment of two separate OSCE missions to Georgia and South Ossetia.

On 12 February, the OSCE's Permanent Council decided to extend the work of the 20 OSCE observers deployed in the areas of Georgia adjacent to South Ossetia in line with the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan. That decision of the Permanent Council did not mention other OSCE decisions, or the lack thereof, with regard to the region.

We believe that the key task of those 20 observers is to prevent further Georgian aggression in South Ossetia by monitoring and informing participating States of the OSCE on the security situation in the border areas between South Ossetia and Georgia, as well as Georgia's implementation of its commitments to withdraw its troops and military equipment to their cantonments.

We expect that the OSCE mechanism for preventing and responding to incidents — relevant agreements on which were reached during a regular round of the Geneva negotiations on 17 and 18 February — will increase trust between South Ossetia and Georgia and generally contribute to strengthening stability and security in the region.

The timely conclusion of that organization's institutional capacity-building process would help it to carry out its functions in the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts more effectively. That would contribute to strengthening cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations.

The main task of the OSCE is to ensure equal and indivisible security for all participating States. No one should strengthen their security at the expense of the security of others. However, that key tenet of the European security charter remains unfulfilled. There is an increasing lack of trust throughout the OSCE space.

The August crisis in the southern Caucuses demonstrated yet again the shortcomings in the effectiveness of existing mechanisms to ensure security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Improving the situation is the aim of the initiative of the President Medvedev of the Russian Federation in drawing up a comprehensive legally binding document on European security that would enable us to set up a common area of collective security for all States of the Euro-Atlantic region, which would certainly also strengthen international security on the whole.

Currently, the Russian initiative is being actively discussed, including within the framework of the OSCE. We expect that there will be close cooperation with the Greek Chairperson-in-Office in the further discussion of our initiative. We hope that the philosophy of work of the Greek chairmanship, as described by Minister Bakoyannis, will help to overcome the crisis situation within the OSCE of recent years and to adapt it to the new global realities. We anticipate that, by the end of the year, the Greek chairmanship will hand over a stronger and more effective OSCE to the incoming Chair.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I join my colleagues in welcoming the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Greece. I am happy that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been working closely with the United Nations system and would like to see that regional organization also working more closely with organizations such as the African Union, because regional organizations should share experiences.

I would like to join my colleague, the representative of Libya, in stating that the Security Council, in particular, should not have double standards. It is true that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Uganda and Burkina Faso made vigorous attempts to have the delegations of the League of Arab States and African Union meet with the Security Council to express their views and raise issues of concern to the Arab League and to Africa. To our surprise, there was resistance in the Council. Definitely, the Council should be ready to listen to different regional organizations when there are matters that concern those regions. Otherwise, the Council's standing will begin to be doubted when we easily give access to a regional organization in Europe but when regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and the African Union cannot easily gain access to the Council to express their views on issues of concern.

It does not matter whether Council members agree or not. What is important is that there should be free communication between different regional organizations and the Security Council, especially on human rights or security issues. I believe that the Council will become stronger and more respected if that channel of communication remains open.

Nevertheless, I welcome the Greek Foreign Minister, and I think that this was a good opportunity for the Council to listen to her and gain from the experiences of the organization that she leads and learn from its work, not only with the Council but also other regional organizations in Africa and beyond.

The President: I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Foreign Minister Bakoyannis for her very valuable briefing to the Council this morning. We admire her tireless efforts as Chairperson in leading the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to ensure security not only in Europe but in the broader Eurasian region. Japan highly appreciates the Greek chairmanship this year and welcomes the recent agreement to extend the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, one of the high priorities of the OSCE's agenda.

Peace and security are indivisible geographically. We need global solutions to global issues. Regional organizations such as the OSCE can make great contributions to the global work undertaken by the United Nations.

Japan, as a partner country of the OSCE, shares fundamental values of peace and stability, sustainable development and human rights and has been actively participating in a wide range of OSCE activities for many years. We have exchanged knowledge and experience with the OSCE by sending experts and officials to field operations, participating in election monitoring missions and providing financial support for seminars and other activities. Through that long-term cooperation with the OSCE, Japan finds it beneficial to tackle together a wide range of global problems with member countries of the OSCE.

First, Japan has actively collaborated in assisting the democratization process through OSCE election monitoring missions. We sent a significant number of monitors, and made financial contributions to election support in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo. Last year, we took part in OSCE election monitoring missions in Armenia, Georgia and Belarus.

Secondly, Afghanistan is one of the areas to which both Japan and OSCE attach great importance. Japan intends to contribute to the OSCE Afghan border security reinforcement project. Japan will extend the utmost support to stabilization and reconstruction, especially as the presidential election is scheduled for this year, which is an important milestone in the State-building of the country.

Thirdly, Japan believes that OSCE's comprehensive, cross-dimensional and integrated approach to security could be effectively addressed by promoting the concept of human security. Japan and OSCE have closely cooperated on issues of human security in the areas of refugee assistance, internally displaced persons, ethnic reconciliation, human trafficking and environmental degradation through various activities, including workshops and conferences.

We are convinced that the human security approach will provide a strong focus on the activities of OSCE. As stated in the concept paper proposed by the Greek chairmanship, it will create a model case of symmetry, synergy and strategy. We believe that the Greek chairmanship, having organized an international conference on human security and climate change last year, will continue to promote such an approach.

In conclusion, in June this year it was Japan's turn to host the annual OSCE-Asian Partners Conference in Tokyo. We would like to share our views and experience, together with our fellow Asian partners of OSCE — the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Afghanistan and Mongolia — in order to deepen cooperation with OSCE. I should like to reaffirm Japan's close collaboration with OSCE.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of France has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I simply wish to say that I listened with close attention both to the statements made by Ms. Bakoyannis and our colleagues on the substance of the issue before us, and to those made by our colleagues from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Uganda on our working procedures, and I was deeply puzzled by them.

We all recognize and are well aware of the importance attached to regional cooperation under Chapter VIII of the Charter. It is a fundamental issue and a guiding principle of the recent initiative of France and the United Kingdom to review, with the Council's support, the modalities of peacekeeping operations. It is true that, once or twice a year, we hear a briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the organization's programme and the status of cooperation between it and the United Nations. The invitation extended to the Chairperson is generally the result of a unanimous decision taken in the context of the Security Council's working group. Thus, if there are double standards, they are collective.

I was especially puzzled to hear that we do not afford the same opportunity to the African Union or the League of Arab States. It seems to me that there is very little debate touching on crises or items on the Security Council's agenda that do not fall within the purview of those organizations. In the year and a half that I have represented my country in this Chamber, I cannot recall a single instance in which the Council has rejected such a request.

I reiterate that as the format is decided by consensus, any rejection would be a collective one and

that those who today complain of alleged discrimination would be accomplices to it. I recall that, in the month of January alone, when France held the presidency and the Council held a great many debates on the Middle East, the peace process and the crisis in Gaza, the Council held no meetings in this Chamber at which the Arab League did not have an opportunity to take the floor. I do not recall ever having rejected a request to speak. With respect to the issue of conflicts in Africa, I believe that our colleague the Ambassador of the African Union has had numerous opportunities to intervene. In just a few weeks, we will probably travel to Addis Ababa to hold a joint meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council.

Thus, to be frank, I fail to understand why we are being criticized, but as it has been done publicly in this Chamber, I am compelled to point out that I would happily study, alongside my colleagues from Libya and Uganda, any information prepared by the Secretariat regarding the participation in 2008 of the OSCE, the African Union, the League of Arab States and any other regional organization in the Security Council's debates. I think it would be useful indeed to speak on the basis of statistics.

I believe it important to note that the Council has no desire to discriminate against any organization, and certainly not the League of Arab States or the African Union, which play essential roles. France has always supported all initiatives, especially those of the Arab League, with respect to the peace process. With regard to conflicts in Africa, we are particularly attached to our cooperation with the African Union. I believe that we all recognize that fact.

The President: The representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank my friend, the representative of France, for his second statement emphasizing the need for cooperation between the Council and regional organizations. However, I do not wish to enter into a public debate on all the issues he raised. Many of those issues made perfect sense to me, but we differ on certain others concerning which I do not want to enter into a public debate.

I wish merely to say that, in the future, when a regional organization asks to brief the Security Council, I hope that the Council will accept and respond to that request, whether it has been made in respect of a broad range of issues or to a specific case of such importance to that regional organization that the Council is called on to consider it carefully and act on it. That is all I wished to stress, and I hope that there will be consensus in the future among all members of the Council.

Not all members of the Council have been opposed to such briefings in the past. Only some have objected, and we hope that in the future no member will raise such an objection.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It seems to me that the exchange of views that we have just heard between our French, Libyan and Ugandan colleagues demonstrates that cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations requires some fine-tuning.

With all due respect to the initiative proposed by our French colleague, I do not believe that this is an issue that should be left to the consideration of the troika of France, Libya and Uganda alone. In the near future, the Russian delegation will develop some considerations on this issue, possibly to be shared in the context of the Russian presidency of the Security Council in May.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Bakoyannis to respond to the comments made and questions raised by members.

Ms. Bakoyannis: I would just like to thank all the members of the Security Council for their encouraging words and their support. The year 2009 will be a difficult and challenging one for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I can only promise that the Chairperson-in-Office will spare no effort to act as an honest broker and will count on members' goodwill and support as we make decisions and seek agreements. As members know, we need to work by consensus, so we will really need all the Council's support.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6089

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6089th meeting

Tuesday, 3 March 2009, 12.05 p.m.
New York

President	Mr. Dabbashi	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Lutterotti
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Puente
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	Turkey	Mr. Gümrükçü
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-25350 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of March 2009, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Yukio Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of February 2009. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing our deepest appreciation to Ambassador Takasu and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

After consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council condemns in the strongest terms the assassinations of the President of Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardo Vieira, and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Tagme Na Waie, on 1 and 2 March 2009. It expresses its deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of Guinea-Bissau.
>
> "The Security Council calls on the Government of Guinea-Bissau to bring to justice those responsible for these violent acts. It calls upon the Government, the political leaders, the Armed Forces and the people of Guinea-Bissau to remain calm, exercise restraint, maintain stability and constitutional order and respect the rule of law and the democratic process. It also urges all parties to resolve their disputes through political and peaceful means within the framework of its democratic institutions and opposes any attempt to change the Government through unconstitutional means.
>
> "The Security Council welcomes in this regard the statements condemning the incidents by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and other members of the international community, and calls on all to assist in preserving the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau and to continue to support peacebuilding efforts in the country.
>
> "The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to support the efforts of the Government and people of Guinea-Bissau to consolidate democratic institutions, peace and stability in that country.
>
> "The Security Council shall remain seized of the developments in Guinea-Bissau."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2009/2.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6090

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6090th meeting

Tuesday, 10 March 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Dabbashi	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Non-proliferation

Briefing by the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-26005 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation

Briefing by the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Ambassador Yukio Takasu, Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006). I now give the floor to Ambassador Takasu.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): This is the ninth 90-day report to the Security Council in accordance with paragraph 18 (h) of resolution 1737 (2006) and the first in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee. The report covers the period from 11 December 2008 to 10 March 2009, during which time the Committee held no meetings but conducted its work using the silence procedure.

Under the chairmanship of my predecessor, Ambassador Jan Grauls of Belgium, the Committee responded to a written query received from a Member State seeking clarifications on aspects of the sanctions regime relevant to interactions with an entity designated in the annex to resolution 1737 (2006). The Committee also approved its annual report for 2008, contained in document S/2008/839.

In the new year, after I had taken over, the Committee received from the secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a copy of a report by the IAEA Director General, entitled "Technical Cooperation: The Agency's Proposed Programme for 2009-2011", as well as an addendum to that report, entitled "Evaluation of Technical Cooperation to be provided to Iran during the Technical Cooperation Cycle 2009-2011". The Board of Governors of the IAEA had approved the report and concurred with the evaluation of technical cooperation to be provided to Iran in the light of resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008).

As has been the case in the past, the Committee received two notifications — one at the end of last year and the other at the beginning of this year — from the Russian Federation with reference to paragraph 5 of resolution 1737 (2006), concerning the delivery of items for use in the nuclear power plant at Bushehr, Iran.

On 3 February 2009, the Committee received a letter from a Member State seeking guidance with respect to its inspections of cargo on a vessel carrying its flag that had been found to be carrying arms-related materiel. The Committee responded to that letter on 6 February, stating that the transfer of the materiel in question constituted a violation of paragraph 5 of resolution 1747 (2007), which states that

> "Iran shall not supply, sell or transfer directly or indirectly from its territory or by its nationals or using its flag vessels or aircraft any arms or related materiel, and that all States shall prohibit the procurement of such items from Iran by their nationals, or using their flag vessels or aircraft".

The Member State provided additional information to the Committee on 12 February, and the Committee subsequently responded on 24 February. On 9 March 2009 — yesterday — the Committee sent letters to the concerned Member States, inviting them to provide within 10 working days any additional relevant information regarding that transaction that may help the Committee carry out its mandate to examine and take appropriate action on information regarding alleged violations of the measures imposed in resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008).

Finally, with regard to reporting by States on their implementation of all the relevant measures set out in resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008), the updated figures are as follows: 91 reports under resolution 1737 (2006), 78 reports under resolution 1747 (2007) and 65 reports under resolution 1803 (2008).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I thank Ambassador Takasu for his report as Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006). We are grateful for the

leadership that he has shown in the opening months of his term as Chairman.

Today marks the Security Council's first meeting on Iran since the release of the most recent report of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) — a report that makes it clear that Iran is still not complying with its international nuclear obligations, including those set out in resolutions of the Council. Today's meeting is also the first time that the Council has discussed Iran since the sanctions Committee examined the case of a merchant vessel found to be shipping arms-related materiel from Iran to Syria. Let me focus on three key issues.

First, the latest IAEA report contains troubling findings that deserve the Council's sustained attention. As the United States and other members of a united P5+1 noted recently in Vienna, we echo the concerns expressed in the IAEA Director General's report, including with regard to the remaining issues that give rise to continuing concern that Iran's nuclear programme has military dimensions. Once again, the IAEA has documented Iran's ongoing refusal to comply with the Security Council's demands, including the clear requirement that Iran suspend its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities. Iran also still refuses to respond constructively to IAEA questions about its past work to develop a nuclear-weapons capability. The United States urges its fellow Security Council members not only to take note of the IAEA's serious findings, but also to vigorously support the IAEA in its continuing investigations of these critical matters.

Secondly, there is the question of a new violation of Security Council resolutions on Iran that was brought to the Committee's attention last month. We have carefully studied the report regarding the inspection of the *M/V Monchegorsk*, which was transporting arms-related materiel from Iran to Syria. The Iran sanctions Committee concluded that that transfer violated Security Council resolution 1747 (2007). The United States supports the steps that the Committee has already taken to address that violation, and we hope that the Committee will take appropriate action under its mandate.

Finally, the United States believes that the Iran sanctions Committee has an essential role to play, even as we offer Iran a new opportunity to increase international confidence in its words and actions. But, in the light of Iran's continued failure to comply with its obligations, the Iran sanctions Committee should redouble its efforts to ensure the full and robust implementation of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008).

As the Council knows, the United States is currently engaged in a review of its policies towards Iran. As President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton, I and other leaders of my Government have noted, the United States will not waver in its determination to ensure that Iran does not obtain nuclear weapons. But the United States also sees an opportunity — a chance for the Iranian Government to demonstrate that it is willing to unclench its fist and begin a serious, responsible discussion about a range of issues. President Obama has already said that we are prepared for principled engagement with Iran, and we will ensure that such engagement is consistent with the decisions of this body.

Iran has very real responsibilities to fulfil. The international community must stand together, firm in ensuring that they are met.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate our colleague the representative of Japan on his quarterly briefing in his capacity as Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006).

The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has just issued a very clear report. Despite the Council's injunctions, Iran is operating nearly 4,000 centrifuges and is set to start operating another 1,500. It has produced nearly a ton of lightly enriched uranium, an amount that is all the more significant and worrying for having been underestimated in the Agency's previous reports.

Iran has refused to cooperate with the Agency. It has undermined the Agency's verification powers by refusing access to the heavy water reactor under construction at Arak. That reactor has been concealed in such a way that activity is no longer visible from the air. It has refused to provide the design of the reactor whose construction at Darkhovin has been announced. It has also refused to implement the transparency measures known as Code 3.1. Those measures, which Iran must apply, are indispensable for short-term comprehension of its projects in the nuclear field. At the most recent Board of Governors meeting, the

Agency's legal adviser made it very clear that that refusal is a violation of Iran's safeguards agreement. Concerning the study on the militarization of the programme, Iran continues to refuse to respond to the Agency's questions and to give the Agency's inspectors access to the relevant individuals and installations. Lastly, Iran refuses to implement the Additional Protocol.

The Agency has thus concluded that it has made no progress. It cannot provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared activities or nuclear materials in Iran. At the same time, Iran has not responded to the proposals made to it in July 2008 to resume negotiations. We must therefore hope that Iran will reassess its behaviour, stop obstructing the Agency's efforts, take the hand that has again been extended to it and finally take the actions expected from it to restore confidence.

For our part, the responsibility of all and of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006) is rigorously to implement the rules of the Security Council. In that regard, today's report of the Committee is both a source of concern and a reason for hope.

Our first cause for concern: A vessel full of weaponry materials — shells of all sorts, bullets, explosives — departed Bandar Abbas, Iran, for Latakia, Syria, in gross violation of resolution 1747 (2007). Moreover, the Committee has asked the Syrians and Iranians to explain themselves within 10 days. We intend to closely monitor the follow-up of that extremely serious matter. We must do everything to prevent any such further violations. The enhanced vigilance of all is indispensable.

But there is also a reason for hope. The Cypriot Government assumed its responsibilities and quickly noted that the cargo of that ship could in no way be conveyed to its destination or returned to Iran. It took the only decision that it could — to keep it on its territory. We must all respond in the same way. States that take these kinds of measures should know that they can count on the solidarity and mutual aid of others — a solidarity which is even mandatory under Security Council resolutions.

Finally, we must learn several lessons from this affair. We should observe total intransigence when confronted with violation attempts. We need to cooperate further among ourselves, systematically report cases of violations to the Committee and investigate them to their end. Finally, the activity and vigilance of the Committee must be strengthened. We are ready to cooperate with the Chairman to achieve that.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I would like to join others in thanking Ambassador Takasu for his first report to the Council and express my delegation's thanks to him and his team for accepting that important responsibility and for the excellent start that they have made in leading the Committee's work.

The United Kingdom continues to have serious concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. The latest report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was issued last month, makes clear that, in defiance of Security Council resolutions, Iran has refused to suspend all its proliferation and sensitive nuclear activities, namely, its uranium enrichment, related activities and various heavy water projects. The International Atomic Energy Agency reports that Iran now has more than 5,500 centrifuges installed, of which about 4,000 are actively enriching uranium for which Iran has no plausible civilian use.

Iran has also refused access to IAEA inspectors to the heavy water reactor at Arak for the second time in a row. That is of particular concern because the design of the reactor at Arak is ideally suited to producing plutonium that could be used for nuclear weapons. The IAEA report makes clear that Iran's refusal to allow access has made it difficult to report in any meaningful way on the construction of the reactor, as requested by the Security Council. The report also repeats previous statements regarding the total absence of cooperation by Iran in connection with issues that give rise to concerns about a possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear programme.

In the light of that, the United Kingdom calls upon Iran to answer the IAEA's questions and implement the transparency measures in the IAEA reports. We further call upon Iran to implement and ratify promptly the Additional Protocol and to implement all measures required by the Agency in order to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The United Kingdom has made clear many times that we do not deny Iran's right to civil nuclear power under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In 2008, the Governments of Britain, France,

Germany and China, Russia and the United States — the so-called E3+3 — refreshed their broad-ranging offer to Iran of June 2006. That offer included help to develop civil nuclear power if Iran suspended enrichment and cooperated in a range of other areas. But Iran has failed to respond substantively to that offer and, so far, has not seriously engaged even on the suggestion of a freeze-for-freeze agreement.

We and our partners in the E3+3 continue to pursue a dual-track strategy — sanctions to persuade Iran to change course and dialogue to lead to full negotiations if the Iranians suspend their enrichment-related activities. Once that has been achieved, we will be able to forge a more productive and positive relationship between Iran and the international community. But if Iran remains determined to isolate itself by ignoring the legally binding demands of the Security Council, then the international community must remain similarly determined to stand together to maintain pressure on Iran to meet its international obligations and to make clear to Iran that its choices will have a cost.

The United Kingdom is grateful for the vigilance and cooperation demonstrated by the Republic of Cyprus in acting to prevent the transfer and procurement of arms and related materiel from Iran on the vessel *MV Monchegorsk*. That was a clear violation of Security Council resolution 1747 (2007), which requires, as Ambassador Takasu has set out, that Iran shall not supply, sell or transfer from its territory any arms or related materiel and that all States shall prohibit the procurement of such items from Iran. The transfer and procurement breach those international obligations. The United Kingdom looks forwards to the Committee receiving explanations from Iran and Syria as to why the shipment was permitted by Iran as the reported State of origin and as to the involvement of Syria as the reported State of destination.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

First, I should like to express my thanks to Ambassador Takasu, Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), for his useful briefing to the Security Council on the activities of the Committee in the past 90 days. We welcome the Committee's adoption of its annual report for 2008 (S/2008/839).

Once again, Libya stresses the need for intensified international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the question of Iran's nuclear programme in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1803 (2008) through stepped-up diplomatic efforts to encourage dialogue and consultations with Iran towards a comprehensive and appropriate long-term solution to this issue. This would open the way for the establishment of full relations and fruitful cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran on the basis of mutual respect and international confidence in the civilian nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

In this regard, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya calls on all parties concerned to initiate direct negotiations towards this objective as soon as possible. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya reiterates its conviction that a comprehensive and non-selective approach must be adopted towards non-proliferation. All States, without exception, must subject their nuclear installations to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

We regret that the Security Council has not, to date, given appropriate attention to the issue of Israel's nuclear weapons, even though Israel refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or to subject its installations to IAEA safeguards. This is frustrating. The peoples of the region aspire to a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East on the basis of the decision taken by the States parties to the NPT at their Review Conference and the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6091

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6091st meeting

Tuesday, 10 March 2009, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Dabbashi	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Quarrey
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 3 March 2009 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2009/128)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-26011 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 3 March 2009 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2009/128)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Fall to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Belgium.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Grauls to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/128, which contains a letter dated 3 March 2009 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic, as well as His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Belgium.

As this is Mr. Fall's last briefing to the Council in his current capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, I wish, on behalf of Council members, to thank him for his tireless efforts in helping to stabilize the situation in the Central African Republic. In doing so, Mr. Fall played an important role in bringing the Government of the Central African Republic and the rebels to the December 2008 inclusive political dialogue, which led to the signing of the peace agreements. May I, together with the other members of the Council, wish him continued success in his future undertakings.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall: As members know, since my last briefing to the Security Council on the Central African Republic on 2 December 2008 (see S/PV.6027), an inclusive political dialogue was successfully held, from 8 to 20 December 2008.

The dialogue was the result of tremendous efforts over the past two years by national stakeholders, supported by their international partners, including the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States. The dialogue brought together around 150 participants from the Government, pro-President political parties, opposition and moderate political parties, rebel movements and civil society. Former President Ange-Félix Patassé, as well as a number of other exiled political actors,

participated in the dialogue. It was chaired by the former President of Burundi, Pierre Buyoya.

Three committees were established, which covered political and governance questions; security and politico-military movements, including rebel groups; and socio-economic questions. While the security and socio-economic committees worked according to developed blueprints — which came in the form of a national security-sector-reform plan of action, developed approximately eight months earlier, and a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, finalized a year before — the political and governance committee had to deal with the most contentious issues. These included the legitimacy of the current regime, which came to power through a coup d'état in 2003 and was legitimized in the contested elections of 2005, as well as ways to include in the governance of the country all political actors who had influence there.

At the end of the 12-day-long discussions, a number of important agreements were reached. In the political and governance area, they included: the establishment of a broad-based Government, including all the entities that participated in the inclusive political dialogue, to implement the outcomes of the dialogue and prepare for the 2009 and 2010 municipal, legislative and presidential elections; the commitment to hold municipal, legislative and presidential elections in 2009 and 2010; the revision of the electoral code and the establishment of an independent electoral commission; the conducting of independent audits of revenue-generating State institutions; and the establishment of mechanisms to promote permanent dialogue among the country's political and social actors.

In the area of security and armed groups, the agreements reached during the dialogue included: the implementation of security sector reform in accordance with the plan of action developed during the national security sector reform seminar in April 2008; the restructuring of the national armed forces; an immediate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme; combating the proliferation of small arms; and the introduction of measures to identify and indemnify victims of past conflicts.

In the socio-economic area, the agreements included: the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy for the period 2008-2011; the reform of public finances; the reform of the management of natural resources; and the development of national human resources.

(*spoke in French*)

As members can see, the recommendations of the dialogue cover a broad range of issues. That reflects the national vision of putting an end to conflict in the Central African Republic. I am pleased to see that the dialogue's conclusions are at the centre of an integrated peacebuilding framework such as that being developed by the Peacebuilding Commission.

I wish to emphasize that there have been other positive developments since the conclusion of the dialogue. A new, inclusive Government was established in January. The steering committee responsible for DDR, which is currently operational, has already engaged the rebel movements with a view to the possible implementation of a DDR programme. It is envisaged that rebel groups will submit their respective combatant lists by 15 March. A dialogue follow-up committee has been established and is scheduled to begin its work, with the participation of a number of international organizations, including the United Nations, the African Union, the European Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC).

However, the progress made thus far is precarious owing to the deterioration in the security situation in various localities in the Nana-Gribizi and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures, in the north of the country. Those localities recently saw intensive fighting and some very bold attacks against governmental institutions and military facilities in Ndélé, Markunda, Bossembélé and Batangafo. Last week, riots erupted in several neighbourhoods of Bangui following an attack carried out against a chief of police by elements of the presidential guard.

The increase in the number of security incidents in the north of the country has been attributed to a rebel group unknown until now, called the Convergence des patriots centrafricains pour la Justice et la Paix (CPJP), and Abdoulaye Miskine's rebel group, the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain. Both movements have issued press releases claiming responsibility for these attacks. They have also accused the Central African Government of reneging on its commitments concerning the implementation of the

dialogue's recommendations and have threatened to join their forces to resume armed combat. It is important to note that former Minister Charles Massi has resurfaced as Assistant Coordinator General of the Political Council of the CPJP.

Despite those setbacks, the prospects for stabilization of the Central African Republic offered by the dialogue remain solid. The dialogue provides a new opportunity to take significant steps towards sustainable peacebuilding in the Central African Republic. Here, it should be noted that Central African actors have stressed the need for support from the international community as they try to implement the recommendations of the dialogue. In that connection, it is encouraging to note that a number of the Central African Republic's bilateral and multilateral partners have already responded positively to that request for support. I welcomed CEMAC's decision to contribute 8 billion Central African francs — approximately $16 million — towards the DDR process in the Central African Republic.

In that context, and as members will have noted in the letter of the Secretary-General dated 3 March 2009 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2009/128), the United Nations intends to review its presence on the ground in order to provide more consistent and better coordinated support for the implementation of the dialogue's recommendations. Such a coordinated presence will undoubtedly help to strengthen the efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Ambassador Jan Grauls.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having given me the opportunity to address the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Central African Republic was included in the Commission's agenda in June 2008, at a very appropriate time. Since then, over the past eight months, the configuration has systematically encouraged and supported the considerable progress that the Central African Republic has made in the area of peacebuilding and stabilization. The inclusive political dialogue, which was held in Bangui last December and which brought together representatives of the entire political class and all of Central African society, as well as the positive results achieved, had been virtually inconceivable last June.

The recommendations of the inclusive political dialogue have begun to be implemented. Indeed, a broad-based Government has been established, including members of the political opposition and former rebels. A steering committee has been formed for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, and an Independent Electoral Commission has been created to prepare the 2009 and 2010 municipal, legislative and presidential elections. Those steps attest to the genuine desire of all parties concerned to work in a new atmosphere of peace and understanding. After decades of internal tension and a dramatic deterioration in living conditions, the population of the Central African Republic yearned for such developments.

The Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic will very soon be finalized and will serve as the basis for long-term engagement between the Central African Republic and the international community. That framework was formulated in close cooperation with all national parties in the Central African Republic and thus enjoys broad national ownership.

However, several major challenges remain, and the Peacebuilding Commission recalled them in a statement that was made public today. The first challenge is security. The resurgence of violence in the north of the country has led in recent weeks to a new displacement of thousands of civilians and gives rise to great concern. That is why it is important to ask all parties to show restraint and avoid reprisals. That is why it is also important to urgently meet the needs of the thousands of civilians displaced and affected by this conflict.

While the first challenge lies in the field of security, the second is political. Given these alarming developments, the Peacebuilding Commission encourages all parties that participated in the inclusive political dialogue to implement as quickly as possible and in a spirit of reconciliation the recommendations resulting from that dialogue. The Commission calls on all political-military groups, in particular the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain, to adhere to the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to become involved in implementing the recommendations of the inclusive political dialogue.

The Peacebuilding Commission believes that the most critical step to preserve the momentum of the inclusive political dialogue is the finalization and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. However, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which is responsible for drawing up that programme, cannot finalize the programme document within every political-military group provides a complete list of its combatants. The initial deadline for submitting those lists was 25 February. It has already been postponed to 16 March. At this stage, no further reports can or should be accepted. We cannot waste any more time.

With regard to the financing of the disarmament, DDR process, it is necessary to raise the awareness of the international partners to the urgency of pledging funds to the trust fund that will be set up by the UNDP. Once the DDR programme document has been finalized, the remaining balance of the funds already allocated to the Central African Republic by the Peacebuilding Fund could quickly be available for DDR. On 30 January in Libreville, 8 billion CFA francs were also pledged by the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa to finance DDR activities in the Central African Republic. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic and UNDP to finalize arrangements to transfer those funds to the UNDP trust fund as soon as possible.

The third challenge is economic. Like other countries in the region, the Central African Republic is particularly affected by the consequences of the world economic crisis. The Peacebuilding Commission is committed, together with the international financial institutions, to seeking mechanisms to respond to those impacts that affect a Central African population that is already very weak.

As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission country-specific configuration, I advocate the establishment of an United Nations integrated mission in the Central African Republic. Moreover, I welcome the recommendations to that end made by the Secretary-General in his letter of 3 March addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2009/128). A rapid implementation of those recommendations is necessary given the urgent need for a consolidated approach by the United Nations during this crucial phase in the political history of the Central African Republic, which the Secretary-General described as "perhaps the most genuinely inclusive attempt to foster national reconciliation in the Central African Republic to date" (*S/2009/128, p. 2*).

Before concluding, I would like very warmly to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador François Lonseny Fall, for the outstanding work that he has carried out within the framework of his mandate in the Central African Republic. I wish him success in his future projects. I cherish the hope that his successor be appointed as soon as possible so as to ensure a strong United Nations presence in the field during this pivotal time. In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Peacebuilding Commission to support the Central African Republic's efforts in national reconciliation and reconstruction.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ambassador Grauls for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that the Central African Republic has taken the floor before the Security Council in this month of March, allow me, Sir, to convey to you the most heartfelt brotherly congratulations of the delegation of the Central African Republic. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is an integral part of the peace process in the Central African Republic. We welcome that country's enlightened mediation in that process. This meeting, held under your stewardship, will, I am sure, be successful.

We would like to pay well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts with regard to the Central African Republic. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is following very closely the developing situation in our country. In these past six months, he has not ceased to step up contacts with the highest Central African authorities. His commitment to the full restoration of peace in the Central African Republic is clear to all. Less than four months after the appearance of his report contained in document S/2008/733 of 26 November 2008, where the idea of an integrated office was born, the Council is called on to carry forward that recommendation, which is now before it.

The complexity of the solutions needed to resolve the problem of the Central African Republic following the convening of the inclusive political dialogue can only be organized within the context of an integrated

process, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his letter of 3 March (S/2009/128). The Government of the Central African Republic welcomes the recommendation for the establishment of a United Nations integrated Peacebuilding Office to succeed the current United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic until 31 December 2009. We endorse the establishment of that Integrated Office, which is innovative in its integration of the Peacebuilding Support Office into the strategic planning and coordination unit.

The placing of the Central African Republic on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission has greatly raised the profile of issues related to our country within international bodies: the United Nations, the African Union, the World Bank, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and others.

The cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government is one of the most exemplary. Once the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding has been finalized by common agreement, we cherish the hope that efforts towards stabilization and genuine national reconciliation will be achieved. The Integrated Office should play a major role in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, which remains the cornerstone on which true political momentum rests. With this new body, the United Nations will be able to speak with a single voice.

We reiterate how pleased we shall be to see the Integrated Office becoming operational as soon as possible in accordance with the recommendation. The Government of the Central African Republic will be happy to work closely with the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who will lead this integrated office, as well as with all the agencies of the United Nations system.

I cannot conclude without sympathizing with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is leaving his post at a very crucial time in the peace process in the Central African Republic. I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.